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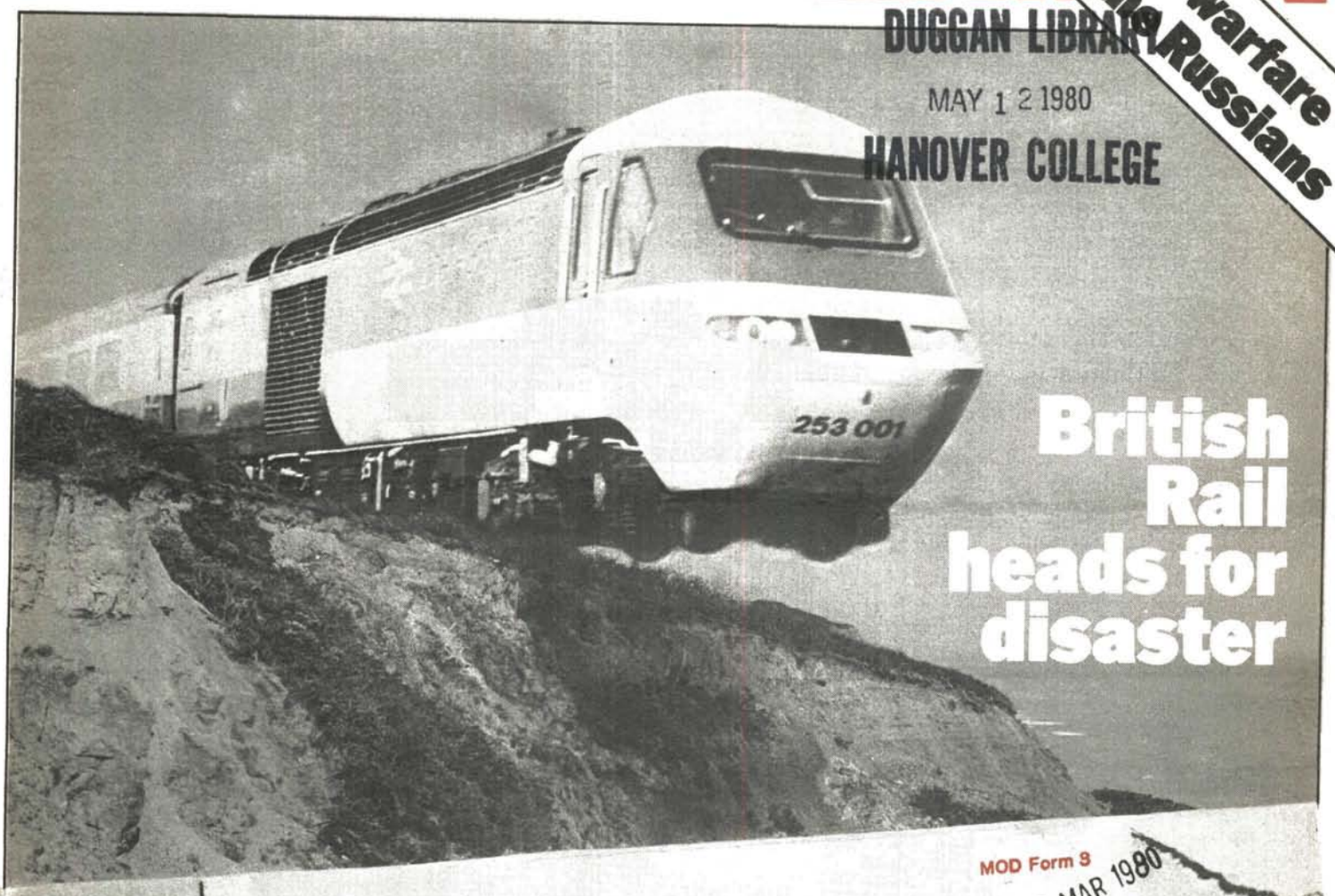

British Rail heads for disaster

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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 99 4 April 1980 No 2559

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New Statesman
10 Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ
Tel: 01-405 8471 Telex: 28449
Cables: Newstat, London WC1

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One nation?

> The Conservative Party is the party of the underdog. The strong, the powerful and the wealthy can look after themselves – and they always do. A Conservative government exists primarily to ensure that circumstances of birth and geography must play no part in expectations or opportunities. This is Tory Democracy – the real thing. The moment we forget that, then the Party has no relevance to the lives of the people, and it has no place in British politics.

That was Dr Robert Rhodes-James, Conservative MP for Cambridge, speaking in Edinburgh at the weekend. Praise from the NEW STATESMAN will perhaps hardly strengthen his lonely position (and where are the other proponents of the 'One Nation' in the Tory Party?) but it was a speech which deserved more attention than it received.

Few people will recognise the present administration in Rhodes-James's definition. With every new day, the Thatcher-Howe-Joseph team take on more of the lineaments of a class party. The fact that their measures enjoy temporary popularity is rooted in the ancestral British belief that if it hurts it must be doing you good. It may be smart psychology, but it is certainly very bad political economy. And all the hard evidence points in one direction – the Two Nations are re-emerging in Britain with a vengeance.

Not only is the Tory Party apparently unconcerned at this, but large sections of it seem positively to rejoice in the fact. Sir Geoffrey Howe's crowd-pleasing measures against strikers, his attitude to prescription charges, most notable of all his policy for higher unemployment – all these went down very well. Rhodes-James's reminder that 'the Conservative Party must be careful to differentiate between the genuinely unemployed and the work-shy' resembled nothing so much as a man distributing temperance tracts outside a speakeasy.

The government shows every sign of believing that high unemployment makes social sense as well as economic realism. With the same sort of perverted Darwinism, it imagines that a harsh climate will penalise the inefficient and encourage the fit. The fact is that bankruptcy looms for many concerns which are very well run but short of accumulated capital. The small, technically venturesome firm fits, more often than not, precisely into this category.

The storm will not distinguish between the just and the unjust. It is like believing that a party of schoolchildren, abandoned on a desert island, would survive on the basis of their respective and relative merits – leaving only the future Nobel Prize winners at the end.

It is easy to recoil from this logic. We shall, evidently, have to wait some time for Dr Rhodes-James to be joined by other Tory critics. But the Labour Party has been loud and plaintive in its immediate response to Sir Geoffrey's measures of last week.

The problem here is that a party which cannot convince itself is very unlikely to convince the electorate. Labour sold the pass on public expenditure and unemployment a long time ago, with the result that Mr Callaghan's protestations sound even more hollow than his usual standard. Behind all the newly-discovered talk about 'compassion' and the social wage, Labour is only really quibbling about details. And, in an argument about *how much* cutting and slashing there should be, the Tories on present form are likely to win.

Can this ratchet effect be reversed? It can, if Labour does two things. The first is to be honest about the mistakes and stupidities of the last government (which in practice means an early contest for the leadership). The second is to avoid the trap which the Tories have sprung. Callaghan and Healey now argue about the *quantity* of public expenditure, and *ipso facto* about the level of cash limits. From a socialist point of view, the argument is one of quality. It may be more difficult to identify and defend certain areas of social spending, but it is better than lumping 'public expenditure' (on everything from Princess Margaret to germ warfare to kidney machines) under one unified heading. Only if proper distinctions are made can socialist priorities be separated from statism and bureaucracy. Dr Rhodes-James may be a Tory, and he campaigned as hard as anyone else (and presumably with his eyes open) for the election of the present crew. But it cannot be left to him to talk about 'the party of the underdog'.

NOTES

North Sea disaster

Brian Wilson writes: There has been no shortage of warning signals that a disaster in the North Sea was on the cards, though an environmental tragedy rather than a large-scale loss of human lives had been more widely anticipated. Since the enormously lucrative oil platform and rig-building market opened up in Europe 10 years ago, it has been frighteningly obvious that the oil and construction companies have been learning much of the technology as they went along.

Before the North Sea oil boom, rigs and platforms were located in maximum depths of 280 feet in placid places like the Gulf of Mexico. In the North Sea they are in depths of up to 700 feet. The climatic conditions, equally, are without parallel in the industry's history. These factors were cursorily recognised in the early years of North Sea development, but they were grossly under-played by the oil and construction companies who were desperate to press ahead with the building of the structures.

The response of the steel builders to the likely conditions was to multiply the normal precautions. But it was recognised that simply making the structures heavier and stronger might introduce new and unfamiliar problems. One critic of steel platforms, Taylor Woodrow's chief designer Bowers Stubbs, said in 1973: 'The very high level of fatigue experienced by these structures coupled with the complex fabrication of the nodal joints . . . imposes very considerable difficulties and indeed doubt concerning their acceptability for these conditions.' The steel platform builders had just as hard things to say about the rival concrete designs which Stubbs was advocating and which, in the mid-70s, every major construction company in Britain was plugging. It seems likely at this stage that both sets of criticisms were well justified. But the doubts were smoothed over as the headlong dash for oil production continued.

The major corrosion risk has also been fully recognised from the outset but no solution has been found, in advance of the structure being exposed to the elements. An Institute of Petroleum report said last year: 'Corrosion represents probably the greatest single threat to steel platforms in the North Sea.

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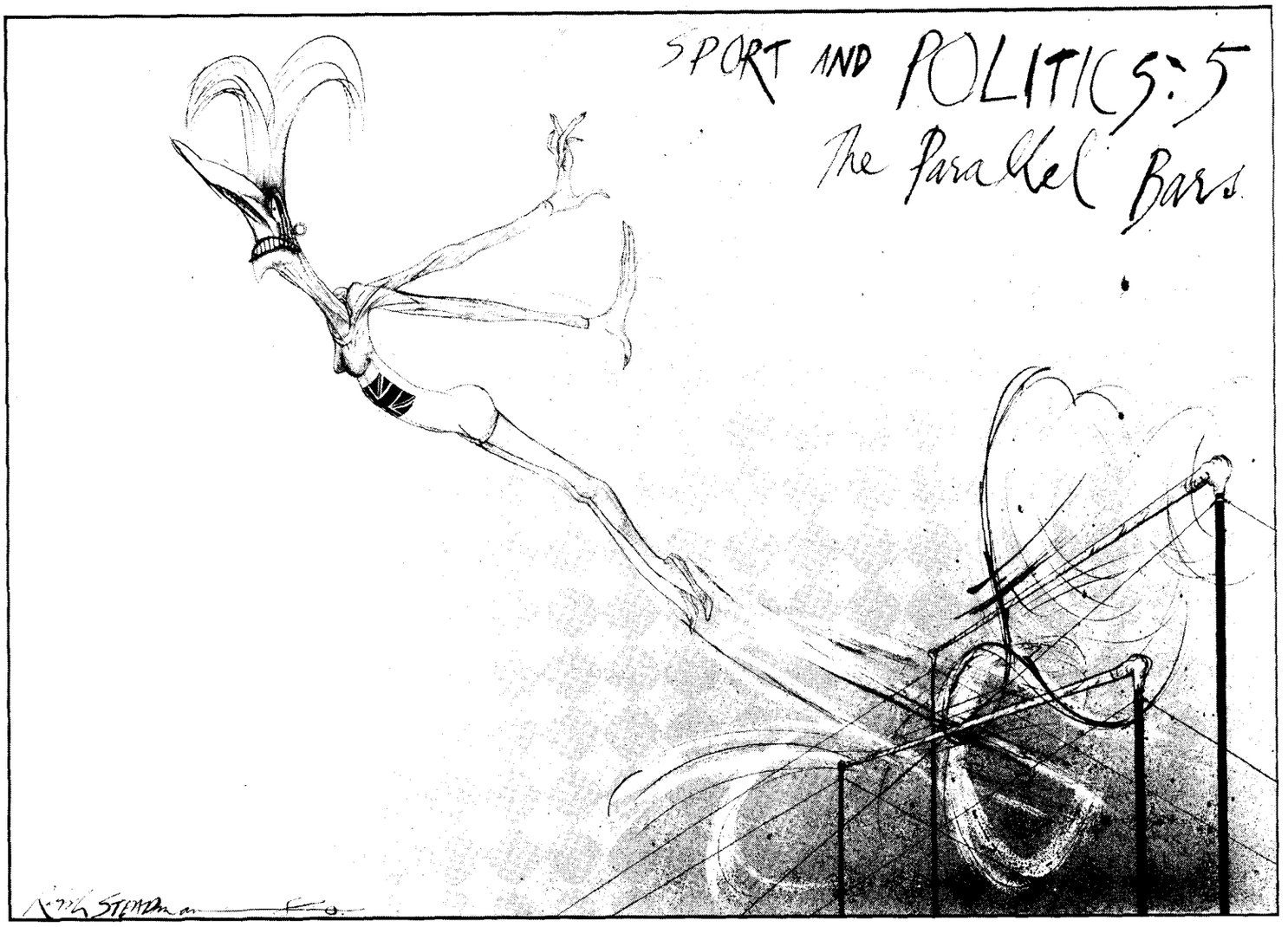

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Even concrete platforms may be subject to these destructive forces, as any damage to the concrete which exposes the steel reinforcing could endanger the integrity of the structure.' The annual checks on the safety of rigs and platforms, which the government demands, are recognised as being inadequate in view of the extreme difficulty in making complex underwater examinations once the structures are in position.

According to Mr T. M. G. Clougley, head of Offshore Structures for Shell UK, addressing a conference in 1978: 'The scale and costs of underwater inspection are many times greater than in other forms of inspection, and this is a cause for concern. Underwater inspection must be sensibly minimised, and this must mean the urgent development and acceptance of reliable integrity monitoring systems for both steel and concrete structures.'

The risk of structural collapse has been heightened by the trend towards converting rigs to uses other than that for which they were designed. This is a cost-cutting exercise which has been encouraged by the fact that, following the exploration boom of the late-70s, there is now a glut of rigs. Experts familiar with the four year old French-built structure which went down last week believe that the loss of one of its five legs would have left it listing but upright, if it was not for the fact that a hotel had been built on top of it as an afterthought. A rig of the same design, under conversion from an accommodation to a production platform, was undergoing special safety checks at Stornoway this week.

The Ekofisk disaster will undoubtedly lead to calls for tighter safety precautions in the North Sea. But much of the damage has already been done, during a decade in which the oil and construction industries have called all the tunes. An oil-hungry government is unlikely to call a halt, merely to save lives or avoid a major blow-out.

Public school perk

John Willman writes: Unnoticed, the budget has given a massive boost to the finances of public schools. The source of this largesse is the tax concession for people giving money to charities under a deed of covenant. Under the old rules giving money under a covenant attracted tax relief at the basic rate only (ie 30 per cent) – and then only if the covenant was capable of lasting for more than six years.

These rules are now to be relaxed 'to assist charities in furthering and extending their work'. From April 1981 tax relief will be at the top rate of tax of the donor – up to 60 per cent of earned income. And to attract tax relief the covenant may be somewhat shorter in duration, from April this year capable of lasting for more than three years.

Public schools already use charitable status to avoid paying much potential tax and indeed there was nothing to stop you paying for private education fees before under a deed of covenant. But the six year rule rather limited the scope for this – given the effect of inflation on the covenanted sum and the length of a private sector school career – while the tax relief was restricted to the maximum of 30 per cent. Now the payments can be spread over as little as four years, and tax relief can be at up to twice the basic rate. For example, take the fees at the recently advertised Radley. Paying under a deed of covenant, the £3,000 a year fees are effectively cut to £1,200 for someone paying tax at the top rate of 60 per cent. The deed must be made by someone other than a parent – a grandparent will do.

Postman's sack refilled

Andy Weir writes: Hans Peter, the German postman of 29 years service who faced the sack for being a member of the Communist Party (see NS 21 March), was cleared in a Frankfurt Court last week. Although this represents a victory for Peter it does not signal any diminishing of the *Berufsverbot*, the decree outlawing 'enemies of the constitution' from state employment. The judge ruled that Peter had not infringed any of the Post Office's rules and that Kurt Gscheidle, the head of the Post Office, who brought the charge, had failed to prove that Peter's political activities constituted a breach of Post Office discipline. The ruling is thought to mark a precedent of considerable importance. It is now possible that disciplinary proceedings for political activities will not be allowed if the person is already in state employment. While this could mark an advance on the previous situation, and indicate that proceedings against the 50 to 60 other state employees facing such action may not go ahead, it does not affect the application of the *Berufsverbot* to those being recruited by the state.

Poor performance

Rick Rogers writes: Last week's government working party report on *Lead and Health* will not silence the growing concern over lead in petrol. Both the composition of the working party and its report – which ignores some key anti-lead research from abroad – have been heavily criticised by scientists and pressure groups.

After looking at over 3,000 research studies, the committee makes 22 recommendations on future policy. Most of these are sensible proposals for dealing with the problem of lead in food, paint and water. But lead in the air (90 per cent of which comes from petrol fumes out of car exhausts) is reckoned a minor problem in terms of how much lead it puts in people's bodies. The working party questions the validity of the growing evidence from countries such as the USA and West Germany that children can be affected by low levels of lead in the

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body, which are generally regarded safe here. For example, in Japan, USA and Russia lead-free petrol is on sale. Britain's permitted level of lead in petrol is currently three times that of West Germany, which phased down the lead level during the Seventies at little cost but with big benefits in terms of air pollution.

Much of the criticism of the working party stems from the fact that no scientist who was expressly concerned about lead in the air was invited to be a member. At least two members of the working party had to declare a pecuniary interest, such as consultancy work for the oil and lead industries. Two members – Professor Patrick Lawther, the chairman, and Dr Donald Barltrop – have in the past maintained – and still do – that lead in the air gives no cause for concern and that leaded petrol is of minor importance. Several members, such as Professor Barbara Clayton and Dr R. Lansdown, have been involved in studies which have concluded there is no significant relationship between lower lead levels and detrimental effects on children.

Another member of the working party, Dr M. A. Waldron, has over the last four years progressively shifted away from a concern about lead in petrol, since moving from Birmingham University to work at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and to edit the *British Journal of Industrial Medicine* – both regarded as hardline opponents of the anti-lead argument. His relationships with the lead and oil industries have caused him numerous problems and he has been an active litigant against any suggestion that he is less than impartial in the lead debate. He has received research funds from the industry's International Lead and Zinc Research Organisation and has prepared an affidavit on behalf of oil companies being sued for the alleged effects of leaded petrol on children.

Given the importance that such a working party should not just be impartial, but should also be seen to be so, the composition may have been unwise. The working party has also been criticised for ignoring some anti-lead studies from Denmark and America that show, for example, that leaded petrol has a more pervasive effect than previously thought on the pollution of plants. So impressed by the work in Denmark was the Atomic Energy Research Establishment at Harwell, that it started its own crash programme to replicate the research. One of its four studies in the last ten years – in 1978 – revealed that people were breathing in up to three times more lead than previously thought.

The working party also expressed reservations about the Needleman study in America which showed that children with a high lead level performed less well than those with a low lead level. The working party highlighted many reservations about the study, saying the conclusions were 'weakened'. But this March, in the journal *Developmental medicine and child neurology,* Dr Michael Rutter concluded that none of these reservations 'are sufficient to invalidate the findings'.

Islington to sell council houses?

Francis Wheen writes: The first crack in Labour's opposition to council house sales may come even sooner than the Tories expected: later this month, in fact, when Islington Council in North London – with 50 Labour councillors and a mere two Tories – will be asked to approve its housing committee's recommendation that it should sell some of its housing. Islington recently passed a motion opposing the government's plans for council house sales and its capitulation may set a pattern for other apparently tough Labour councils throughout the country.

Those Labour members who favour the idea say that they have been forced into it by the recently announced reduction in central government's housing investment allocation (HIP). Islington is to receive £48 million in the coming year, of which £36 million is committed to programmes where contracts have already been agreed. This leaves the council only £12 million for new work – building, rehabilitation, improvement grants and so on. Under the system of cash limits, councils are allowed a 'tolerance' of 5 per cent over their HIP as long as they find the money themselves – it works out at £2.4 million on a sum of £48 million – and it is the desire to raise this cash that has led Islington to consider selling 150 empty houses.

At last week's housing committee a former housing chairman, Margaret Watson, proposed an amendment saying that the latest batch of houses for sale should only be offered to housing associations or co-operatives. This was defeated, and it seems pretty clear that in its desperation for quick and easy money Islington may simply put the houses on the open market – to be snapped up by the very same property speculators from whom Islington compulsorily purchased them in the mid-1970s albeit at lower prices.

Claudia Wright

The Jews and Jimmy the Baptist

IN DOMESTIC POLITICAL terms, the New York Democratic primary result last week was an anomaly that is unlikely to block President Carter's renomination. In international policy terms, however, the world may pay a heavy price for the way Brooklyn and Great Neck, in the Long Island suburbs, voted on 25 March.

The press here has neglected to mention that in the rural and industrial urban areas of upstate New York, Carter made almost a clean sweep over Senator Kennedy, although not by large margins. If the President's public expenditure cuts or the inflation rate had been troubling voters, they should have produced a more decisive protest in such areas. It also appears that Catholic blue-collar voters were not prepared to shift to Kennedy any more here than they had in Illinois two weeks back. Black voter turnout was not as high as in the past, but those who voted did not give Kennedy a majority. Which leaves an unmistakable conclusion about the result: Carter was defeated in areas of New York City and the surrounding suburbs where there are 50 per cent or greater concentrations of Jewish voters, and the largest total Jewish population in the world. The primary result was thus a unique Jewish community phenomenon – a reaction to the perceived shift in Presidential policy towards Israel.

This could backfire badly. If the Jewish community cannot stop Carter's renomination or his re-election, then it runs the risk of isolating itself completely from the President. He may win re-election owing the Jews nothing – and without a future re-election campaign to worry about, Carter could well move American policy into the hitherto forbidden areas of Middle Eastern policy – negotiations with the PLO, reductions in aid to Israel, participation in the Euro-Arab dialogue on terms the Europeans currently accept. This has never been possible before. Wait until after the election, leaders as diverse as King Hussein and Muammar Qaddafi have been quietly told, then you will see a change in American policy.

Much depends on how crucial New York State will be in the Presidential Election, and how well Ronald Reagan, as the Republican candidate, could attract support in New York City. The primary showed that the Democratic local political leaders, including the Jewish mayor, were evidently unable to prevail over the determined Jewish community organisers. Whether traditionally Democratic Jewish voters would be prepared to carry their Zionism to the extent of switching parties is another matter, but it has happened before. In October 1945, on the eve of municipal elections in New York which President Truman wanted to influence, Secretary of State James Byrnes was told to urge Lord Halifax, the British Ambassador, to press for a faster opening up of Palestine to Jewish immigration. Byrnes made it clear that a response was needed before the election, or else Truman would publicly demand one. The Jewish pressure on the President so exasperated him that he exclaimed: 'Jesus Christ couldn't please them when he was here on earth, so how can anyone expect that I would have any luck.'

Carter faces a similar difficulty to Truman. New York State is worth 41 electoral college votes for the President – only California, with 45, is worth more. Under the American system, the winning candidate is the one who wins a majority of votes in enough states to gain a majority in the electoral college. This is not the same thing as winning a majority of all votes cast: the states in which they are cast can make a decisive difference.

If Reagan can retain the Western and Midwestern states which voted Republican in 1976, and Carter the South then the result of the election might hinge on the way just three states go – Texas (26), which Carter won narrowly in 1976, Illinois (26), which Ford won narrowly, and New York. If this is so, Carter may not be able to escape the fate which the Jewish community has planned for him – capitulation or defeat. He thus goes into next year's round of talks with the Egyptian President and the ones following with Mr Begin with much heavier liabilities than he had anticipated.

CARTER IS ALSO trapped by his own advisers. Several of his Jewish aides, notably Stuart Eizenstat, his assistant for domestic policy, his deputy, David Rubenstein, and Robert Strauss, the President's special trade representative, Mid-East ambassador and now campaign chairman, have argued vigorously with Carter to force a clarification, a rewording, and ultimately a retraction of the essence of his intentions towards the Israel settlements, following the 1 March vote at the UN. Within the past six months, this group has been instrumental in prising the President apart from the positions urged by the non-Jewish and non-Zionist advisers, Brzezinski and Vance. Over considerable opposition from both, Carter was persuaded by Eizenstat last summer to begin publicly blaming the Arab oil producers for American gasoline shortages and domestic inflation. Then, in January, this group with the additional presence of Sol Linowitz, the current Middle East negotiator, persuaded Carter, in the last hours before his State of the Union speech was given, to drop all language reflecting his respect for Palestinian aspirations. Instead, they substituted the sentence which he read to loud applause: 'Let no-one doubt our commitment to the security of Israel.'

The President's manoeuvres have just about exhausted the restraint the US has been able to extract from the West European allies and Japan as they are prodded by the Arab League into making a separate peace with the PLO. Several West European delegations at the UN – Ireland, Portugal and Spain – were furious at having played broker between the Arab bloc and the United States, and to have accepted and passed on assurances from the US delegation that the revised Security Council resolution which had been negotiated by 1 March would be acceptable. The volte-face this time, coming on top of the hopelessly mismanaged 'consultations' over Afghanistan in February, released the French President to make a sharp break with the Allied position on a Middle Eastern settlement during his tour of the Gulf. Carter is fortunate that Schmidt is keeping his mouth shut for the German elections. But the Elysée Palace took special pains to rub the message in, during an interview which Giscard's confidant, Michael Poniatowski, gave to *Der Stern* just after the Carter turnabout. Poniatowski used some of the sharpest language ever used by a European official against the President: 'This man has acted like a fool, dropped everything, yielded everywhere, always retired and has performed like a political Baptist.'

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Cash crisis at British Rail

PATRICK WINTOUR and MICK HAMER report on British Rail's finances and the way they are being undermined by Tory myths about inefficiency.

THE NEXT TWELVE months will decide whether or not British Rail is to career over the edge into long-term decline with falling standards, high fares and large-scale cuts in the rail network. Not even the charisma and charm of Sir Peter Parker, BR's chairman, can disguise how uncomfortably close such a prospect is. BR is being squeezed from above by a politically unsympathetic government, happy to cut back funding and then blame declining standards on public sector inefficiency, and it is being squeezed from below by a set of unions eager to break out of a familiar British cycle of long hours and low pay. The cuts in government subsidy, confirmed in last week's public expenditure White Paper, ensure that any general 20 per cent rise in railwaymen's pay (BR are responding to the unions' claim this week) will entail a 15 per cent fare rise in September. This would be the second fare rise of the year, the first time this happened since 1975, and would probably mean a big drop in demand as in 1975-76.

The extreme vulnerability of BR's cash position was revealed last Christmas when it was forced to delay payment of a £2 a week installment of a previously agreed wage increase so that it fell into the next financial year. At the same time it introduced a partial freeze on recruitment and track repair. Despite these measures it is believed that BR only managed to keep within its cash limit (the amount of external borrowing allowed) by leaving £30m. of cheques unsigned. Although the 1979 annual accounts, to be published this month, will show that BR has just about kept within its 1979 Public Service Obligation contract (the negotiated amount the government provides to cover non-commercial operations BR would not otherwise undertake) it is likely that the PSO will be broken this year, and not from 1981, as its last Corporate Review predicted in the summer. BR's planners do not expect to keep within the PSO contract in any succeeding year, mainly because of increasing real wages not recoverable by higher fares or an increase in passenger traffic. The losses in the passenger business will only be partially recovered in other parts of BR's operations.

The government can make life difficult for BR in a variety of ways. Indeed a recent parliamentary answer took over one page of Hansard just to state the different types of financial control which BR exercised. But the two overriding restraints are the PSO and the investment ceiling; together these add up to the cash limit. On both these BR is facing a real squeeze. According to a major BR-Leeds University international comparative study published last week, British Rail's level of government financial support as a percentage of GDP is the lowest in Europe. The squeeze on cash is such that central government subsidy to passenger services has been progressively reduced from £657m. in 1974-75 to £393m. in 1980-81 (all 1979 prices). The cash limit for 1979/80 – originally framed in March 1979 – set an external financing limit £40m. below BR's own forecast requirement and in June, Norman Fowler, the transport minister, cut the limit by a further £15m. taking it to a final level of £113m. As one disgruntled senior manager put it: 'We don't mind being given a tough set of rules to play within but that's equivalent to moving the goalpost after we've kicked the ball.'

The intensity of the pressure worsened this March when financial targets were set for Inter-City and freight – the two railway operations which don't lose money. By 1982 Inter-City is expected to increase its contribution to total indirect cost by £28m. to £133m. at 1979 prices. Freight, which is currently struggling under the weight of the steel strike, is expected to make a greater cost to its investment programme by covering two-thirds of its current cost depreciation, as opposed to 30 per cent in 1978.

AT THE SAME time the government's provision for investment is not increasing. The BR-Leeds joint study shows that BR has a lower level of investment per train kilometre than any other of the ten railway networks analysed. In addition, it also faces a massive increase in the need for investment. According to the Corporate Review:

> Under the Modernisation Plan of 1955 large fleets of diesel locomotives and DMUs (two or three car trains powered by diesel engines) were built in a period of 10 years, so that the original locomotives will all be life-expired by 1993 and the DMUs by 1988 . . . technical opinion is that extending life of DMUs beyond 25 years would not represent good value for money. But because of the the curb on investment this Review has had to assume that some DMUs will not be replaced for 40 years.

The 1978 locomotive rolling programme provided for building 20 'Class 56' locomotives in 1979 and 1980, 22 in 1981, 40 in 1982 and 50 in 1983 and subsequent years. This has now been cut back to 17 a year in 1982 and to only 12 in 1983. The Corporate Review comments 'Continuation of the present levels of investment which has been static now for 5 years, at around £330m. per annum in real terms, would increasingly affect the size and quality of services provided'. BR feel they need an extra £50-65m. a year for investment right through to the mid-90s just to maintain a 'steady state'.

This does not take into account any money that is needed for the building of the Channel Tunnel. One great advantage of the Tunnel would be that freight could attract a much larger proportion of the international traffic. Currently only 2 per cent of BR's freight traffic is forwarded or received from abroad as against Belgium's SNCB figure of 38 per cent.

Similarly British Rail would undoubtedly profit from investment funds in electrification: Britain is only 17th in the electrification league table and thus does not greatly benefit from its lower maintenance costs. The Department of Transport also welcome electrification but will do nothing ahead of the final report on railway electrification.

The problem of financing railway electrification led Sir Peter Parker to float the idea of an injection of private capital into the railway industry last year. Norman Fowler took up this theme with gusto last month and proposed establishing a holding company comprising BR's commercial businesses' – Sealink, British Transport Hotels and the British Rail Property Board. Although British Rail would retain some, and as yet unspecified, stake in the company, converting these businesses to a holding company would severely reduce BR's ability to cross-subsidise its railways. The proposal would increase the cash crisis at British Rail. In 1978, the Property Board made a profit of £23m., £16m. of which was used to finance the general railway business. Fowler's proposals could jeopardise part, or all of this cash.

In addition to the financial squeeze on British Rail there is also considerable political pressure. The Monopolies Commission has been asked by Norman Fowler to investigate the efficiency of commuter services in London and the South East. As the Commission's terms of reference do not include the financial aspects of these services, the unions rightly see the Commission as a public relations device designed to produce a bit of union-bashing, and enhance the Tories' electoral prospects in the commuter-belt marginals.

FACED WITH THIS squeeze on its finances British Rail has remarkably few options. There are four main areas where costs could be cut, or revenue increased. Broadly these are improved productivity, a reduction in the quality of service, the closure of loss-making passenger services and increasing fares. Each of these options is fraught with difficulties.

The main motive for the present squeeze is the government's desire to force productivity improvements on the railways. This policy was started by Tony Crosland in the last government, whose hawkish approach was considerably influenced by the Liverpool University economist Richard Pryke. In the *Rail Problem*, Pryke and his collegue John Dodgson advocated reducing railway manpower by about 90,000 by 1981, over the 1971 level. In summer 1976 Richard Marsh gave hostage to fortune by saying 40,000 jobs should go by 1981. Later estimates have been both more modest and realistic. British Rail, in their 1979 Corporate Review estimates that some 29,000 jobs could be lost over the next ten years.

Discussions on productivity are included in the current pay negotiations. On British Rail's shopping list is single-manning of some trains – expecially freight trains – removing restrictions in the use of telecommunications and other changes in manning practices.

One-man freight trains are quite common on some continental railways. And the BR-Leeds report, comparing the performance of European railways, notes that BR's freight train productivity is

> very much worse than that of any other railway, requiring more than twice as many staff to run a freight train as the more efficient railways.

Single-manning has the double attraction for BR that it would not only cut costs, but also enable the railways to increase their share of the freight market by cutting some prices. It has, for example, a lower market share for chemicals, fertilisers and metals products than the French and German railways.

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The new sliding-door suburban trains could also be operated by one man – in much the same way that trains are currently being operated on London Transport's Victoria Line. However, before either freight or passenger trains could become one-man operated, agreement has to be reached with unions over the use of radios linking drivers, signalmen and passengers. Radios would also have to be installed on a number of freight locomotives.

At the moment the guard is responsible for the train's safety. If a train breaks down then the guard has to place detonators on the line to warn following trains and also has to phone the traffic controllers from the nearest signal. Putting the crews directly in touch with the controllers removes the need for many guards.

However, the unions are opposed to one-man operation. So far they have only been willing to approve one-man operation on purpose-built lines like the Victoria Line. More seriously, however flexible the unions are, they have to be able to sell any productivity deal to their members. And this poses serious problems. Only this year services on the line from Moorgate to Hertford North were disrupted because the guards opposed the introduction of radios on their trains.

There is also the question of working practices. Under the existing agreement with the unions a railwayman has to work eight hours once he has signed on. British Rail wants the unions to agree to greater flexibility in the length of shifts, so that they can match the hours of duty to the work required. This lack of flexibility in the rules partly accounts for the poor productivity of footplate staff. A driver signing on for eight hours may only drive his locomotive for about four hours. Not all of the remainder are accounted for by non-driving tasks, such as reading all the warnings of track repairs, and checking the mechanical state of his locomotive. As part of the general push to improve productivity BR also wants to make Sunday part of the railwayman's ordinary week – and thus save the automatic Sunday overtime payments.

There is also a controversy over second men. Second men were formerly needed to stoke the fires on steam locomotives. There are still some 7,000 second men employed on BR, although according to BR's evidence to the Select Committee on Nationalised Industries, only 2,000 of these are needed to train for driving jobs. ASLEF argues that second men are needed for safety reasons, but, under a 1957 agreement, second men were largely eliminated on the Southern Region.

BR FACES TWO major obstacles before these gains in productivity can be realised. One is the Department of Transport. The Corporate Review estimates that 20 per cent of BR's projected manpower economies depend on its investment programme. Considerable savings could be made by introducing new sliding-door trains in London and the South East to replace the existing slam-door trains. Yet the rate at which these savings can be achieved depends on the government's attitude to BR's investment ceiling which it says depends on the union's agreement.

This is the second obstacle. But it would be wrong to infer, as the government clearly does, that the railways are in the grips of a union stranglehold. During the ten years from 1968 to 1978 the number of jobs on the railways was reduced by nearly 47,000. The NUR has generally co-operated with the need to reduce staff, through natural wastage, especially where new investment in the railways was involved. Perhaps the most noteworthy example of this co-operation has been the signalling programme where hundreds of small signal boxes, and their staff, have been replaced by new centralised control rooms.

In 1976 the unions acquiesced to the loss of some 7,000 jobs over two years, chiefly to avoid cuts in the size of the railway network. However, this co-operation finished in 1977, when the unions felt that they were receiving nothing in return and were paying for the network size with their jobs. The general picture of the union attitude is borne out by the BR-Leeds survey which found that only two European railways achieved a faster reduction in the size of their labour forces between 1971 and 1976.

Compared with other European railways BR's productivity, in terms of output per man, is good. But in terms of output per man-hour it is extremely low. This distinction is explained by the long hours that the British railwayman works: 25 per cent more hours than his, or her, European counterpart to produce similar output.

The unions, understandably, are sceptical of any direct relationship between productivity concession and high wages. Lord Beeching, after all, in 1963 promised the unions that if they accepted his cuts he would see them into the top half of the pay league. This did not happen. The BR-Leeds study shows:

> British railwaymen fare worse in gross earnings terms in comparison with their continental colleagues, than do all British manufacturing employees in comparison with continental employees.

In recent years job protectionism has taken precedence in union minds over increased earnings, while for management the incentive to keep labour costs down has been ever present in an industry where labour costs constitute 60 per cent of total costs. But the resulting low pay has led to a high turnover of staff (150 per cent last year for track repairers in the London-Midland region); chronic shortages of guards and also excessive working on Sundays and rest days (63 per cent of Southern Region guards work on Sundays). The new Earnings Survey shows that hours worked by manual railwaymen have increased since 1976 by 2.4 to 50.8 hours.

BR is thus in the contradictory position of having a staff shortage and a need to cut manpower. Broadly the national figures are the same but there are wide discrepancies geographically and between grades. BR's problem will be eased by the age profile of its workforce. Of its existing staff 46,000 (including about a quarter of footplate men and guards) are due to retire within the next decade. However, even if BR can conclude a successful productivity deal with the unions it will be a long time before the financial benefits are felt.

THE SECOND OPTION open to BR is to allow its quality of service to deteriorate. Understandably BR management is reluctant to do this but the investment squeeze may give them no alternative. For the customer the most obvious consequences will be an increase in cancellations and poorer timekeeping. Already the Post Office is threatening to withdraw its £38m. mail contract because of the worsening service.

Closing loss-making, mainly rural, passenger services could – according to the Corporate Review – reduce BR's PSO by around £8m. to £12m. in 1984. This kind of saving, would only stave off BR's financial crisis by a matter of months. There is also the problem of quite how much revenue would be lost to the railway system by closing these lines.

Just how serious this could be was emphasised by a study of the line from Exeter to Barnstable, carried out by Peter White at the Polytechnic of Central London. He found that three quarters of the passengers of this line were going on to use other BR trains, and that the extra revenue more than offset the loss BR was making on the line. The 40 services which the corporate planners wanted to close involved about 100 miles of railway.

Furthermore, the closure of rural railways is a political hot potato. So when the Corporate Review proposals were first leaked nationally in the *Guardian* last November Transport Minister Norman Fowler immediately reacted by ruling out widespread rail closures.

> As I have told the House, I see no case for another round of massive cuts in the railways.

But rural railways remain under pressure from two sources: the hawks in BR who want to close them because they spoil the railway's Intercity image, and the need to replace the clapped-out diesel multiple units which operate these lines. Although the potential for saving money by closing these services is small their future depends on the DTp's willingness to find the money for new trains.

British Rail's only short-term option is to increase its fares. Although passenger traffic has recovered fairly well from January's 20 per cent increase there is considerable apprehension that a further fare rise could negate many of the marketing gains made in recent years.

Compared with other European railways BR has already got the highest passenger fares in Europe. The BR-Leeds study shows that the average revenue per passenger kilometre for British Rail was over 2 pence compared with 1.3 pence for French and 1.6 pence for German railways. This high fare level is caused by a low level of state support for the railways and results in less passenger traffic British Rail is 70 per cent self-financing, against 55 per cent for French railways; and whereas BR's share of the passenger market is just over six per cent the French Railways have eleven per cent.

Clearly British Rail cannot continue to buy its way out of cash crises by raising its fares The only long-term answer to its problems is to increase its productivity. But it is far too facile to expect the unions to give up jobs simply in return for promises of better pay Broken promises litter the railway tracks. The British railwayman has the worst pay in Europe, and the longest hours. If the government wants to reduce manning levels on the railways, then it should be prepared to put in more money, both to increase pay rates and to pay for labour-saving equipment.

The railway's productivity can also b improved by increasing its traffic, as well as b shedding jobs. This too tends to the conclu sion that greater government support i needed. Investment schemes like the Channe Tunnel will improve the railways' produc tivity. But a case can also be made fo increasing the PSO. Part of the reason behin BR's poor productivity, per man hour, com pared with European railways, are the lo traffic levels caused by high prices, themselve a function of a low level of state support.

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KELLY INQUEST
Rob Rohrer

A public inquiry would produce a different picture

A field-day for lawyers

THE JIMMY KELLY INQUEST – now taking on the air of a trial without a judge – goes into its third week after Easter, seriously hampered by the Chief Constable of Merseyside's decision to withhold evidence from the coroner and his jury. The Chief Constable, Kenneth Oxford, is refusing to allow the full disclosure of a third post mortem report on Kelly, prepared by Professor Alan Usher, head of forensic pathology at Sheffield University. The Merseyside force's QC at the inquest has described the document as 'private and privileged' and said only the relevant medical findings will be released. The section Oxford has ordered suppressed is believed to deal in detail with the original police version of the events surrounding Kelly's death.

In a another move, Merseyside's chief constable has shown how his extensive powers can be used to undermine even further the inquisitorial role of the inquest. Oxford is refusing to allow inquest witnesses to see their police statements, unless his own QC, Andrew Rankin, wishes to challenge a witness directly by quoting from the original police statement.

In 1969 the Lord Chief Justice recommended that inquest witnesses be given copies of their police statements on request unless they have some 'sinister or improper purpose which might prejudice the course of justice.' In a criminal trial witnesses can be allowed, months after the events in dispute, to refresh their memory.

The tactics of the Chief Constable – labelled 'apparent hypocrisy' by Gilbert Gray, QC for the Kelly family – have borne early and substantial fruit. The inquest has been dogged by witness after witness complaining, understandably, that they have difficulty in recalling in detail the incident around midnight on last 20 June.

Rankin has missed few opportunities to press this advantage home. Again and again he has sprung the trap on poor recollection, after leading witnesses deep and deeper into uncertainty. Time has fogged the memory, he barks.

The inquest has been unfettered by anything like judicial discipline – with its rules on hearsay, restrictions on leading questions, and some check on grinding, repetitive cross-examination.

UNDER THESE handicaps evidence has been to some extent successfully dissected and diluted. There have been retractions and admissions in the face of confusion. Take, for example, last Saturday's *Guardian* headline: 'I COULD NOT HAVE SEEN THE PUNCHES' – SAYS WITNESS. The witness was Lawrence Healey, a labourer and former soldier, who was accurately reported by the *Guardian* as saying in cross-examination that all he was able to see at one point in the incident was the top half of the officer in uniform.

The motion of the officer's hand, he admitted, could have been the officer pulling his arm away to prevent Kelly grabbing it. With that suggested movement uppermost in his questioning Rankin drew from Healey the admission that in part of the incident he could not have seen any blow actually land on Kelly.

Healey's impression, to put it no higher, was that an officer was giving Kelly – a 'good

Jimmy Kelly, arrowed, at a wedding shortly before he died.

going over'. The recollections on which that was based faltered under fierce cross-examination. But Healey's impression, was dramatically supported by George Carman – Q.C. for the Police Federation – who admitted that a policeman will admit to punching Kelly three or four times.

In front of a public inquiry, or an inquest presided over by a high court judge a different picture of certain witnesses' evidence would have been assembled before the jury, drawing upon *all* the evidence, with less resort to bullying and cross-examiner's sophistry.

TO JUSTIFY secrecy over witnesses' statements, Merseyside police, through their counsel, have cited the judgement in the Blair Peach inquest. Last November the Lord Chief Justice turned down an attempt to get from the coroner all statements provided by the police. He refused largely on the grounds that they were 'police property'. No-one else had any legal title to them and no-one on the Peach side faced any connected charges.

Mr Justice Griffiths also commented: 'A Coroner's inquest is an inquisitorial procedure with a very limited objective indeed. It is not intended to widen the coroner's inquest into adversarial fields of conflict. I think it would be very unfortunate if coroners' inquests were turned into a field-day for lawyers.'

The Kelly inquest has become just such a field day. Whatever the verdict, this inquest and the Blair Peach one that follows in West London almost immediately have served final notice of the unsuitability of inquests for investigating suspicious deaths in police custody – if for no other reason than the power of a Chief Constable to manipulate what is heard by the coroner and his jury, and therefore what is relayed to the public.

Michael Meacher

To them that have, even more

TAKEN TOGETHER the two Tory budgets have brought about a massive switch in the distribution of income in favour of the rich. Last week's budget gave the well-paid company director a tax hand-out twelve times as high as that given to the skilled worker, or even lower management, for that matter.

As the table – which I have constructed using the Treasury's own figures – shows, the value of income tax cuts rises steeply once the class barrier has been crossed. Together the two budgets have given lower management a tax gain of £7.86 a week; middle managers have gained £45.71. Thereafter the tax handouts rise astronomically until the, admittedly small number, of £100,000 a year people get £393 a week. This policy has, of course, been justified by eulogies to 'incentives' for 'wealth creators' (as though wealth was only created in boardrooms and not on factory floors); but to lavish tax gifts 124 times as high on a company chairman as on his low-paid workers seems excessive even by Tory standards.

If account is taken of the effect of increases in indirect taxes and mortgage interest rates, then everyone earning below £15,000 a year (i.e. 98 per cent of the population) is worse off under this government by between £2 and £12 a week. But above this level the gains have been massive. At the very top the increases have been equal to nearly four times the entire wage packet of the average paid worker.

Even more important are the changes in capital taxes in the recent budget. Doubling the threshold for capital transfer tax from £25,000 to £50,000 is worth £125 million a year. This is about £2,900 for each of the 43,000 CTT-payers. Together with the favourable treatment of businesses and the tax free transfers between husband and wife it is now possible for estates worth £250,000 to be passed on without a penny paid in tax. Increasing the investment income surcharge is worth £31 million; the income tax relief on capital losses, £20 million and the tripling of the capital gains tax threshold to £3,000, a further £65 million. As a result, the level of personal capital taxation in Britain will fall to 0.2 per cent of GDP, its lowest post-war level and half that of America, the citadel of capitalism.

Budget gains and losses for a married couple

Weekly gross earnings	Gains per week from Budget I (June 1979) income tax reductions	Gains per week from Budget II (March 1980) income tax reductions	losses per week from Budget I increase in VAT to 15% & increase in petrol duty	losses per week from Budget II increase in duty on beer cigarettes wines & petrol approx.	losses per week from increase in mortgage interest payments (Jun & Nov. 1979)	TOTAL GAIN/LOSS Per Week
£60	£2.01	£1.17	–£1.70	–£0.60	–£3.00	–£2.12
£100	£3.17	£1.17	–£2.90	–£1.00	–£5.20	–£4.76
£200	£6.69	£1.17	–£5.90	–£1.50	–£12.20	–£11.74
£400	£37.98	£7.73	–£11.00	–£3.00	–£12.20	+£19.51
£2,000	£379.80	£13.17	–£21.50	–£5.00	–£12.20	+£354.27

Sources: income tax gains from Budgets: Treasury figures
indirect tax increases: calculated from 1978 Family Expenditure Survey but figures only approximate because of variation in consumption between households
Mortgage interest payment increases: Building Society figures, November 1979 and assuming no mortgages in excess of £25,000

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"We have the resources of manpower, money and organisation, to meet all the challenges the future has to bring."

Extracts from the Statement for 1979 of Lord Armstrong, Chairman of Midland Bank.

The Group's results

In 1979, record pre-tax profits of £315.5 million were achieved by the Group, including the share of profits from associated companies. This represents an increase of 36 per cent. over the pre-tax profits for 1978 which incorporated the profits of Bland Payne, our insurance broking interest which has since been sold. After taxation, minority interests and extraordinary items, an attributable profit of £166.2 million was available to shareholders.

Our performance last year was materially affected by the exceptionally high level of interest rates. Nevertheless, for the whole period our activities were adversely affected by the operation of the Supplementary Special Deposits scheme which precluded us from competing freely for new business. Another feature of particular concern has been the increase in our operating costs.

Provision for future development

Whilst the profitability achieved in 1979 may be viewed with satisfaction, it is necessary to remember that the attributable profit of £166.2 million is needed to meet the demands of capital adequacy, to pay a dividend and to provide a contribution towards further investments which are essential to the future development of the Group.

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To meet these requirements, we must look to our profits after tax as, unlike industrial companies who have the benefit of stock relief, banks are given no tax allowance on the growing volume of capital which has to be held as backing for a deposit base which increases in times of inflation. It must also be remembered that to support the Group's developing activities it has been necessary to increase our capital base both by rights issues and issues of subordinated loan stock, which together have raised over £400 million during the last five years.

Capital resources

During 1979, 795,000 shares were issued under the profit sharing scheme and options were granted on a further 1,420,000 shares.

A revaluation of the more important freehold and long leasehold premises of the Group has resulted in a surplus of £126.2 million.

Shareholders' funds, including retentions from this year's profits, have increased in money terms during the year by £260 million to £1,220 million.

Our total capital base was further augmented in December 1979 by the issue of US$125 million Guaranteed Floating Rate Notes 1989 by Midland International Financial Services B.V., the Bank's Dutch subsidiary.

In the light of the position which I have outlined above, we are confident that we have the capital resources to be able to take advantage of investment or business opportunities which may arise.

Group strategy

In 1974 and 1975 we reviewed our strategy and set before ourselves objectives designed to take advantage of the new freedoms we had been given and to realise the potential of our recent acquisitions – Thomas Cook, Montagu Trust, which included Samuel Montagu and Bland Payne, and Drayton Corporation.

We decided that while our domestic banking, with its traditional blend of money transmission and lending services, must be and should remain the hub of the Group's business, faster growth and a greater proportion of Group profits should be looked for from operations outside the United Kingdom itself, and from activities other than traditional banking.

Dividend increased

The Directors have declared a second interim dividend of 12.5p per share which gives a total for 1979 of 20.0p per share, compared with 16.44p per share for 1978. The cost of these dividends is £32.6 million, leaving £133.6 million for retention in the business.

The outlook

The record of the past five years is one of economic ups and downs with successes intermingled with setbacks. No doubt the future will continue to be as challenging and for some time to come we must go on living with uncertainty.

The achievements of the past five years, the growth we have secured and the foundations we have laid, encourage me in the conviction that we are well placed in resources of manpower, money and organisation, to meet all the challenges the future has to bring.

Midland Bank Group

Lord Armstrong's Statement and the Report for 1979 are available from:
The Secretary, Midland Bank Limited, Head Office, 27 Poultry, London EC2P 2BX.

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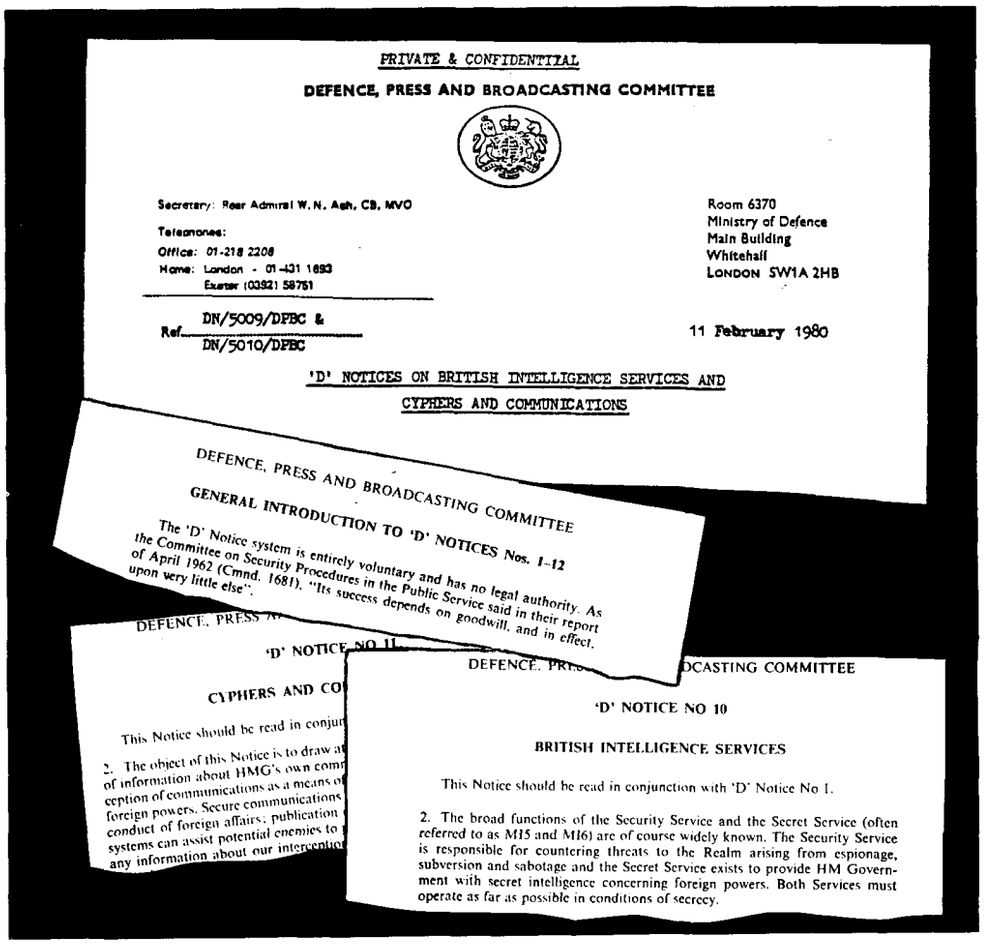
The D Notice quangette

Recent articles on security in the NEW STATESMAN have provoked a move by the almost forgotten 'D Notice', or Defence Press and Broadcasting Committee, to reassert its existence and authority. We therefore sought to clarify, in correspondence, what role (if any) the Committee and D Notices had in the 1980s; our inquiries were rebuffed. DUNCAN CAMPBELL reports on a lesser known quango inside the Ministry of Defence.



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DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

Secretary: Rear Admiral W. N. Ash, CB, MVO

Telephones:
Office: 01-218 2206
Home: London - 01-431 1693
Exeter (03921 58751

Room 6370
Ministry of Defence
Main Building
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2HB

Ref. DN/5009/DFBC & DN/5010/DFBC

11 February 1980

'D' NOTICES ON BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICES AND CYPHERS AND COMMUNICATIONS

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION TO 'D' NOTICES Nos. 1-12

The 'D' Notice system is entirely voluntary and has no legal authority. As the Committee on Security Procedures in the Public Service said in their report of April 1962 (Cmnd. 1681), "Its success depends on goodwill, and in effect upon very little else".

DEFENCE, PRESS AND BROADCASTING COMMITTEE

'D' NOTICE NO 10

BRITISH INTELLIGENCE SERVICES

This Notice should be read in conjunction with 'D' Notice No 1.

2. The broad functions of the Security Service and the Secret Service (often referred to as MI5 and MI6) are of course widely known. The Security Service is responsible for countering threats to the Realm arising from espionage, subversion and sabotage and the Secret Service exists to provide HM Government with secret intelligence concerning foreign powers. Both Services must operate as far as possible in conditions of secrecy.

THE D NOTICE SYSTEM is one of the greater mysteries of British journalism. Many members of the public believe it to be a means for the government to suppress news of their favourite grievance. Even quite experienced journalists working on a 'sensitive' story fear – absurdly – that their efforts may be frustrated by the arrival of the D Notice carrier, despatched urgently from the Ministry of Defence. American and other foreign journalists regard the system of self-censorship it embodies as peculiarly British, a further example of placid press complacency.

Ironically, one reason the D Notice system has broken down is the deep secrecy with which it is surrounded. Few media employees have any idea of what D Notices say, or where in their respective organisations they might be found. If they did know what the D Notices said, they would be surprised by the all-embracing sweep of censorship which they suggest. D Notice No 1 on 'Defence Plans', for example, would if obeyed prohibit the British public from hearing anything not 'released officially' or 'published in another country' on:

> Information relating to . . . defence policy or plans . . . actual Service manpower strengths by specialities, categories or trades . . . future movements or intended destinations of HM Ships . . .current or projected tactics (or) trials. In cases of doubt, you are requested to seek advice through the appropriate Government Department.

Quite clearly, the press does not in its daily work suppress all information on defence which has not been 'officially released'. It therefore comes as something of a surprise that a serious body can issue such a permanent proclamation and continue to expect to be taken seriously.

D Notice No 1 is just one of twelve notices which have remained unaltered since their issue in August 1970. Contrary to popular myth they do not arrive by despatch rider, but lie gathering dust in an Editor's drawer. Each set of notices is contained in a small green loose leaf folder. The folder also contains an explanation of the system and a list of committee members. Each folder is numbered and stamped in gold lettering (the NEW STATESMAN is issued with no 511).

The members of the D Notice Committee include four top civil servants and 11 'press and broadcasting' representatives. Numerically, it would appear, the Committee is run by the press. The truth is clearer from a detailed examination of the membership list; the civil servants are all heavyweight Permanent Secretaries, while the press members are predominantly some distance from frontline news gathering. The civil service members are Sir Frank Cooper, Chairman (MOD permanent Under-Secretary), Sir Robert Armstrong (Home Office), Sir Arthur Hockaday (also MOD), and Sir Anthony Duff (Deputy Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office). The press contingent is led by Windsor Clarke, the 'Group Editorial Consultant' of Westminster Press, who is the Vice-Chairman, and includes the following:

> John Grant, Managing Editor, *The Times;* J H Donlan, News Editor, the *Sun*; J H Ramsden, Editor of *Flight* magazine; J Bishop, Editor of the *Ilustrated London News*; B Vickers, Editor of the *Scottish Daily Record;* David Chipp, Editor-in-Chief of the Press Association; T Smith of the *Melbourne Herald* cable service; H Whetstone, Editor of the *Coventry Evening Telegraph;* Richard Francis, BBC Editor of News and Current Affairs; and D Horobin of ITN.

The Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee might have greater credibility as an advisory body if their record was as anything other than a rubber stamp for the civil service view of affairs. The membership distinctly omits those sections of the press with a critical attitude to government secrecy. The Committee in fact seldom meets more than once a year, and then almost ceremonially. Since 1971, when the current set of Notices were issued, the Committee has met 11 times. All the work is done instead by the Committee Secretary who is a salaried £15,000-a-year Ministry of Defence employee. The current holder of the position is Rear Admiral W. N. Ash, who was appointed at the beginning of this year.

ALL TWELVE D Notices take the form of general please-do-not-publish-anything-new concerned-with-certain-topics. On occasion 'some relaxation may be possible' from stiff censorship: the most widespread ban, as may be imagined, concerns intelligence activities. D Notice No 10 calls for a complete secrecy on all details of intelligence or security activities. Its terms would specifically prohibit publication of any of the NEW STATESMAN stories on these subjects this February. In particular, telephone tapping cannot be discussed:

> You are requested not to publish anything about . . . details of the manner in which well-known intelligence methods (eg telephone tapping) are actually applied or of their target and purposes . .

Our article on this subject, which was reported by almost every other publication

D Notices 'in force' since 16 August 1971

1. **Defence plans, operational capability and state of readiness**
2. **Classified military weapons, weapon systems and equipment**
3. **Royal navy warship construction and naval equipment**
4. **Aircraft and aero engines**
5. **Nuclear weapons and equipment**
6. **Photography**
7. **Prisoners of war and evaders**
8. **National defence – war precautions and civil defence**
9. **Radio and radar transmissions**
10. **British intelligence services**
11. **Cyphers and communications**
12. **Whereabouts of Mr and Mrs Vladimir Petrov**

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thus breached D Notice 10 (and others). This did not matter in the slightest; the D Notice system bears no relationship to the Official Secrets Act, and it was clear (not least from the Home Secretary's recent announcement on the subject) that telephone tapping was a matter of considerable public concern, particularly as it had got so out of hand.

Admiral Ash reflected official alarm over awakening public interest when he circulated a reminder to Editors that D Notices were still 'in force' on the 11th of February. D Notices do not, however, have any 'force'. They merely operate by consent and are written to reflect a presumed consensus. But the system is now far behind the times, hopelessly immutable, and ultimately irrelevant. Neither the NEW STATESMAN nor any other responsible publication would wittingly publish information which endangers life or serious national interests. In these matters, however, neither we nor anyone else is usefully guided by the blanket ban on discussion contained in D Notices issued by a committee rubber stamping the views of the vested military and other civil service interests. In these circumstances the Editor of the NEW STATESMAN has suggested to Admiral Ash that the disbandment of the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee would be a worthwhile contribution to the present government's crackdown on unnecessary quangos. The D Notice Committee is currently maintained at public expense on the Ministry of Defence budget.

Admiral Ash replied tersely (see box). His letter arrived, in true D Notice fashion, by despatch rider from the the Ministry of Defence and the envelope is reproduced on this week's cover.

ON CRITICAL OCCASIONS in the past, the D Notice Committee has ill served the press, and demonstrated who actually calls the shots. In 1961, the committee cheerfully passed out a notice which ostensibly banned all unauthorised discussion of any military equipment whatsover until 'officially announced'. An outcry by some alarmed newspapers resulted in the notice being withdrawn and rewritten; it then became (and now remains) meaningless. The current equivalent notice (No 2) – 'Classified Military Weapons, Weapons Systems and Equipment' – is unhelpful, since it precludes discussion of 'classified' systems weapons but offers no guidance as to which are, and are not 'classified'.

Persons not known for their radicalism, such as Lord Shawcross and Chapman Pincher of the *Daily Express,* have observed that D Notices were to avoid embarrassment or to 'protect a department rather than national security'. The worst example of this was in 1967, when a new notice was rushed out to prohibit any discussion of traitors living abroad (Philby, Burgess and Maclean). The Notice was aimed specifically at investigations into the full extent of Philby's treachery then being conducted by the *Sunday Times* and the *Observer.* Both papers, after some debate, completely ignored the attempt to suppress the Philby story.

Both the abortive censorship of the Philby affair, and the D Notice rumpus of 1967 involving the *Daily Express,* left their mark on the procedure. Subsequently, it has become clear that the system, besides its absurd generalities of censorship and irrelevance, has no value in one area where such a body might make a positive contribution to journalism and the public interest. That is the administration of the Official Secrets Act and the opening up of the processes and activities of government. Two cases under the Official Secrets Act have show that obeying D Notices provides no protection whatsoever to journalists. In the 1970 *Sunday Telegraph* case, both the newspaper and journalist Jonathan Aitken had cleared their articles entirely (which made use of an alleged official report on British arms supplies to Nigeria at the time of Biafra) with the D Notice Committee. It was of no avail.

Similarly, in the 1977 ABC case, where the present author and another journalist interviewed a former soldier with intelligence experience, we were in obedience to the terms of D Notice No 10, which is only concerned with the publication, not the *gathering,* of information. Once again, although the point was usefully taken in defence, it did not prevent a long and costly prosecution.

As far as opening up government is concerned, the Committee as presently constituted is clearly not interested. To raise these issues, the NEW STATESMAN's Editor Bruce Page responded to Admiral Ash's circular with a lengthy comment on the issues, and an invitation to debate the matter (see box). Admiral Ash has replied that discussion would be 'tendentious'.

We do not suggest here that D Notices should be ignored and forgotten. For most of the major national media, that has already happened to a greater or lesser extent. (Minor publications may continue to be intimidated.) But formal recognition should be given to the actual ending of the system, through the disbandment of the Committee in its present form. It might ideally be replaced by a more genuinely representative interface between Fleet Street and Whitehall which sought to open up the government and not to close down press investigation. In the meantime, it clearly borders on the farcical to suggest, as Admiral Ash did in February, that a set of largely forgotten non-legal rules remain 'in force'.

Correspondence between NEW STATESMAN and the D Notice Committee

Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee
Memorandum Ref DN/5009/DPBC & DN/5010/DPBC **11 February 1980**
'D' Notice on British Intelligence Services and Cyphers and Communications

Following the appearance in the Press of recent articles on the subjects concerned, enquiries have been received from Editors as to the continuing validity of D Notices Nos 10 and 11.

The need to protect the information on the intelligence services covered by these two notices is unchanged and remains of the first importance in the interests of national security. Editors are requested to be continued to be guided by the advice contained in them. As is the case with all D Notices, the guidance in Notices Nos 10 and 11 is kept under review by the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee.

The Secretary of the Committee remains available to Editors at all times for consultation and advice on any aspect of the D Notice system.

W. N. Ash, Secretary of the Committee

New Statesman **14 March 1980**

Dear Admiral Ash,

After some consideration, we feel that we should reply in some detail to your letter concerning D Notices 'in force'. It is unfortunate that the letter omits to refer to the General Introduction which is issued with D Notices, and in particular the observation therein that the 'D Notice system is entirely voluntary and has no legal authority'.

Your letter appears intended to answer enquiries from other Editors who, following the recent publication of a number of articles on intelligence matters, are confused as to the role of D Notices. It is unfortunate that nothing in the letter seeks to balance the public interest in these matters with the blanket ban on discussion contained in the two Notices – Nos 10 and 11 – to which you refer. These Notices, it is worth observing, are unaltered since their issue on the 16th August 1971.

You will perhaps be aware from reading recent NEW STATESMAN articles and other reports that matters we have recently raised in the areas concerned are of deep public concern. This, we would suggest, is evident from the press, parliamentary and public response to our discussions of phone tapping, mail opening or the real cost of the intelligence services. The Home Secretary, for example, has recently seen fit to convene an inquiry into telephone tapping.

The D Notice system, the Introduction also notes, 'depends on goodwill and in effect very little else'. There is no reason not to extend all goodwill to yourself and your committee members. There are many reasons not to extend the same silent goodwill to the matters and organisations covered in the D Notices you mention.

It has always been an open question whether an informal arrangement made in exceptional times could be legitimately extended and institutionalised. Today, it cannot be said that there is any simple unanimity about political issues. It must be stressed that during the 1970s the intelligence services in many Western societies have, by their actions and attitudes, lost the confidence of large sections of the public. (The fact that there are other societies where in which such trust has never existed does not affect the point.)

If it is the case that these notices have been kept 'under review', then it is remarkable indeed that there has been no change in them to reflect the changes in public knowledge and public attitutdes since 1971.

During the 1980s – in our argument at least – there are political and civil liberties which are directly threatened by many activities of the intelligence and security agencies (D Notice No 10) and by those departments engaged in communications interception (D Notice No 11). No doubt you would take a different view, but it would be hard to deny that this is a legitimate subject of debate. If the 'reviews' conducted by your colleagues and yourself lead to no discernible changes, then we would ask you to consider whether your organisation still serves any useful purpose.

It must be plain to you and your committee that many serious media organisations now give the system little or no credence. They apply instead their own best judgment on what may wisely be published and what may not. A set of D Notices attempting to suppress any real information in the areas concerned is of no value.

As a contribution to public understanding we propose to publish edited versions of your letter and our reply.

Yours sincerely, Bruce Page, Editor

Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee **19 March 1980**

Dear Mr Page,

[. . .] Your representation of the D Notice system is so tendentious and wide of the mark that I do not think that anything would be gained by joining issue on it.

You know, of course, that the Periodical Publishers Association, of which I understand the New Statesman is a member, is among those who represent the Press on the Defence, Press and Broadcasting Committee.

Yours sincerely, W. N. Ash

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The campaign of misinformation

Are the Soviet forces using nerve gas in Afghanistan? They are certainly facing considerable popular hostility, and are not over-scrupulous about civilian casualties. But, as GWYNNE ROBERTS writes, the evidence for the use of gas is very unconvincing, and has all the hallmarks of a 'black propaganda' operation. There are two regrettable consequences of this. The first is the impetus given to a new arms race involving chemical and bacteriological weapons. The second is that violence is done to truth – if the Russians ever do resort to chemical warfare, who will believe it after this campaign of misinformation?

Ever since the Germans first deployed chlorine in a large-scale attack against the Russians and Western Allies in early 1915, and killed thousands, chemical warfare has been an emotive topic – and a highly effective weapon in the hands of the skilled propagandist. Then, the British had a field day whipping up national and international sentiment against their enemy, and manipulating neutral opinion against the Kaiser whom *The Times* branded 'William the Poisoner'.

Today, 65 years later, little seems to have changed. But instead of Europe, Central Asia seems to have become one of the focal points in a propaganda campaign involving the two Superpowers and wild allegations that gas is being used against the Muslim rebels in north-east Afghanistan. These claims have aroused widespread concern among some western experts who fear they can easily damage CW disarmament talks now underway in Geneva, and accelerate an East-West arms race in the chemical sector.

The prospect is a grisly one. This century, a whole devil's kitchen has been tested and developed. There are gases which can make their victims vomit, go blind, blister, suffocate, convulse, and the latest nerve agents are lethal in minutes in almost undetectable quantities (one milligram and less will kill). Outlawed by the 1925 Geneva Protocol, allegations that they are being used in contravention of this agreement automatically causes world-wide unrest, especially when a signatory of this accord – the Soviet Union – is apparently involved.

The American news media have carried a flurry of reports that the Russians have unleashed nerve agents and mustard gas against the backward mountain tribesmen of Afghanistan in their drive to smash the insurgents. Moscow has angrily denied these accusations, calling them 'unpardonable lies' and a 'CIA concoction'. Lieutenant General Nikolai Chervov of the Soviet Armed Forces General Staff said in an interview published by the Novosti news agency last week that any western reports of chemical warfare carried out by Soviet troops in Afghanistan was 'an ill-intentioned fabrication by Washington (and) had not a grain of truth in it.'

What is clear, and this view is supported by western military analysts and some chemical warfare specialists, is that these accounts are deeply suspect. Pentagon claims that the Soviets are stepping up their production of chemical weapons are also questioned. In fact, the Afghan stories bear the hallmarks of a campaign of misinformation possibly initiated by ill-informed rebels, but then seized on and embroidered by US intelligence for use as black propaganda against the Soviets.

Rumours that chemical weapons were being deployed surfaced in late September 1979 when Soviet advisers assumed an active role in helping the Afghan Army quell the insurgents. On 29 December, the *New York Times* reported: 'Afghan rebels say the Russians have already used gas in some attacks.' But four weeks later, the story became more precise.

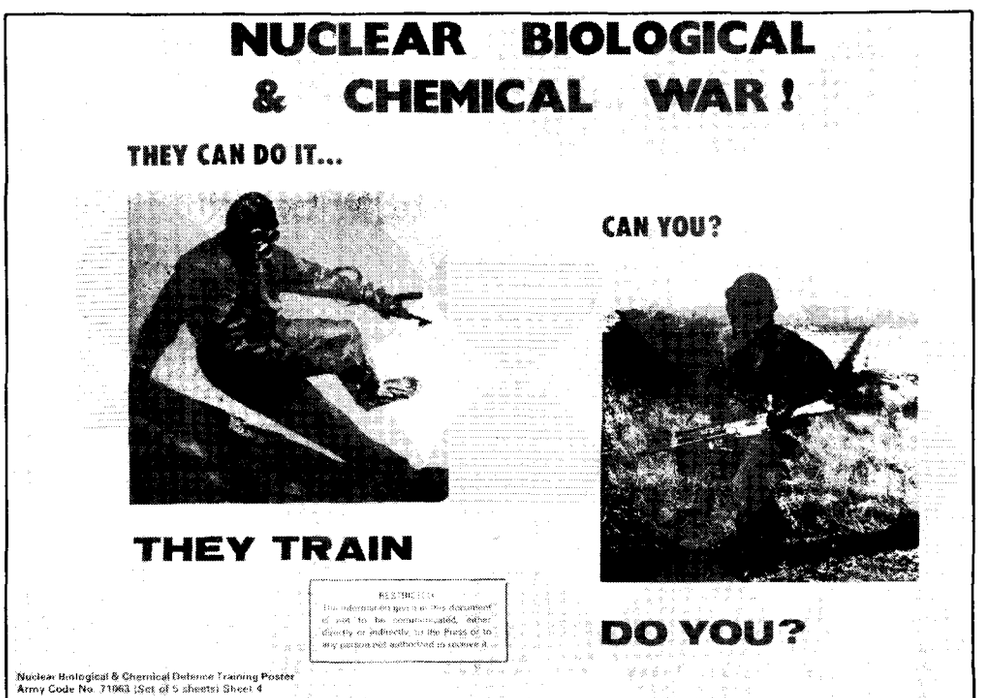
On 23 January, the American news agency United Press International carried reports from Washington and New York that soman, a nerve gas first prepared in Nazi Germany in 1944, had been deployed against rebel positions near the northeast cities of Faizabad and Jalalabad and in central Bamiyan and northern Takhar provinces. The information was attributed to anonymous US intelligence sources quoting 'a defecting Afghan Army officer and other refugees' who apparently had described chemical bombs that burst in mid-air.

Exactly how Afghans unacquainted with chemical weapons had managed to identify soman is a mystery. Even a trained chemist would have needed a well-equipped laboratory and a sample of the agent concerned to reach that conclusion. What is known, however, is that US intelligence believes soman to be one of the standard Soviet chemical weapons. Apart from its extreme toxicity, it has one characteristic that makes it particularly suitable for use in the cold winter climate of the Afghan mountains – it can be deployed in temperatures well below zero. (Its freezing point is about minus 80 degrees centigrade.) Like other organophosphorus compounds, it paralyses the nervous system by blocking a key enzyme needed to control muscle movements. Death from asphyxiation can follow within minutes.

In any gas attack, however, in which soman or any other nerve agents would be used, not all would be fatal casualities. Many would escape death but display the symptoms of nerve gas poisoning such as shortness of breath, nausea, vomiting and dimming of vision or eye pain. No cases are reported to have surfaced in the Pakistani refugee camps bordering Afghanistan.

The intelligence sources quoted by UPI admitted the US administration did not have any corroboration of the chemical used. Nevertheless, within days, the US State Department gave further credence to these accounts. Officials told journalists of unconfirmed reports that Soviet aircraft had dropped bombs 'which disperse chemicals that cause blindness, paralysis and death'. A spokesman said these accounts were persistent and had come from enough different sources to warrant a fuller investigation.

ONE CHEMICAL warfare specialist who made an independent assessment of these reports after contacting 'cognisant authorities' in Washington was Julian Perry Robinson from Sussex University, himself a world authority on the subject. 'All of this elaborate array of allegation in fact rested on one single source, namely a defecting Afghan Army officer,' he said. 'Moreover, the source was not himself an eye-witness of the alleged CW attacks; the accounts he gave to American debriefers were based on what he had been told by others. This being so, it is not clear why the State Department should have referred to a plurality and persistence of reports,


NUCLEAR BIOLOGICAL
& CHEMICAL WAR!
THEY CAN DO IT...
CAN YOU?
THEY TRAIN
DO YOU?
Nuclear Biological & Chemical Defence Training Poster
Army Code No. 71963 (Set of 5 sheets) Sheet 4

This 'Nuclear Biological and Chemical Defence Training Poster' encourages front line troops to practise their chemical warfare. A copy was sent anonymously to the NEW STATESMAN. The poor production suggested strongly that it might be a fake, but the Ministry of Defence confirmed on Monday that it was 'genuine'.

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although it was certainly correct in describing the allegations as unconfirmed.'

Perry Robinson's scepticism is shared by British television cameraman Nick Downie, a former member of the Special Air Service (SAS), who spent four months with the rebels in Kunar province. He left the region in late December – at a time when the first newspaper reports of alleged Soviet gas attacks surfaced in the United States.

While inside Afghanistan, he was also told of these mysterious chemical warfare attacks. 'The Afghans talked of chemical bombs bursting high in the air. What actually happened was that normal bombs containing either high-exposives or phosphorus had been equipped with air-burst fuses which had either been set incorrectly or simply went wrong,' said Downie. 'Instead of going off 100 feet above the ground, they were exploding at a height of 3,000 feet. I saw this happen three or four times when planes were attacking rebel positions in the villages. I treated all these accounts with the gravest suspicion. The Afghans who bring in these reports, including Army officers deserting to the rebels, are extraordinarily backward in their understanding of modern weapons technology.'

'When I was there, Russian advisers were based in the garrison town of Chagha Serai, the Kunar provincial capital, and Russian pilots were flying helicopter gunships. There was certainly no concerted policy to kill civilians, and this is exactly what you would achieve with nerve gases. The civilians and rebels are so closely intermingled that if you hit one with CW agents, you'll hit the other. The tribesmen are so thinly spread over large areas – one group here and the other miles away – that gas would have been ineffectual. To saturate the area, you would have needed colossal quantities, and thousands of civilians would have been poisoned. With the refugee camps just a few days distant, news of this would have soon filtered through to the outside world. It hasn't.'

In February, there were signs, albeit short-lived, that American officialdom was also beginning to doubt the veracity of its own intelligence reports. But any momentary hesitation was quickly forgotten. *Newsweek* quoted Pentagon experts later that month as confirming indirectly the presence of air-burst bombs used to deliver poison gas, and the magazine identified the agent as mustard gas. This causes massive blisters, and if the victim survives, leaves ugly scars on the skin. Again, there appears to be a total absence of medical evidence that Afghan refugees now in Pakistan display any of these symptoms.

The only firm corroboration for these reports seemed to be the presence in Afghanistan of Russian decontamination equipment, the TMS-65, a truck used to wash down military vehicles and tanks exposed to poison gas, and air strikes in areas where chemical attacks were alleged to have occurred. 'Their presence cannot be defensive,' argued William Safire in an article published in the *New York Times*. 'In Afghanistan, the Soviet purpose in using Asian anti-communists as guinea pigs has become clear: poison gas is a counter-insurgency weapon the Soviets can and will use.'

Yet, according to the Pentagon, such equipment is regarded as organic to the Soviet Army. 'Each Front (the largest Soviet field command) is supported by a chemical brigade,' says one US Army CW publication,

ADVERTISEMENT

An open letter to the Rt. Hon. Margaret Thatcher MP

Dear Prime Minister,

I am not a British subject, but take the liberty of writing to you because of your declared friendship towards my country.

It is a near miracle that I am alive and able to write this letter. I survived despite the Nazi persecutions and despite the British policy of preventing Jews escaping from Nazi-occupied territories. Against such odds I managed to reach Palestine and became, in the view of the British Government, an 'illegal' survivor. But I was the exception to the rule. The rule was death. The reason given for this cruel anti-Jewish-anti-Zionist policy was that, for the efficient conduct of the war, Arab good-will had to be secured. The easily predictable self-defeating outcome of this 'policy' was that tens of thousands of able-bodied Jews, keen to join the ranks of the anti-Nazi fighters, joined the queues to the gas chambers and that the spiritual leader of the Arabs, the Mufti of Jerusalem, joined Lord Haw-Haw. This myopic and cruel playing of the Nazi game, inspired by some influential members of the Foreign and Colonial Offices, remains an eternal blot on the brave anti-Nazi war record of the British people.

Incredibly, after the War the same anti-Jewish-anti-Zionist policy again raised its ugly head, on even flimsier pretexts than before, when the gates of Palestine were closed to the remnants of European Jewry. At a time when Nazi practices had become known all over the world, any British policy inviting, however remotely, comparisons with Nazi brutality, was bound to fail and did so, leading to the liquidation of the Mandate.

After the establishment of the Jewish State, Britain took a back seat in Middle East affairs, apart from the Suez episode, particularly after withdrawing from east of Suez. The present abandonment of this policy ill-befits her because it smacks of a French arrogance in meddling in other peoples' affairs, because it reeks of the old anti-Zionist venom, and, above all, because Security Council Resolution 242 was the brain-child of the very same gentlemen who now propose its substantial change, thereby revealing an unparalleled lack of principle and consistency.

The 'new initiative' of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, apparently referring to 'self-determination for the Palestinians', would suggest that the Arabs to the west of the river Jordan constitute a separate national identity. Britain's recognition in 1952 of the annexation by Jordan of the West Bank and east Jerusalem expressly accepted that the national home of these Arabs was the Hashemite Kingdom. It accepted that Jordan, which constitutes no less than 78% of what was Mandatory Palestine, *is* the Palestinian Arab State. This was in turn underlined by Resolution 242, which treated the Arabs of the West Bank as a refugee problem. This view was, of course, shared by all the countries which accepted the Resolution, including those which now so much lament the 'national deprivation' of the Palestinian Arabs and including the Arab countries themselves, which raised various objections to the Resolution, but none on the national account. That these Arabs never considered themselves to be a separate nation is borne out by the fact that no-one, neither a Palestinian nor any other Arab nor any friend of the Palestinian Arabs (including Lord Carrington), ever suggested the creation of a separate Palestinian state while this territory was under Arab control during the period 1948-67!

After the debacle of the Six Day War, the Arabs gradually realised that their openly declared genocidal policy of driving the Jews into the sea would not do and a more sophisticated approach was required, especially if they were to achieve the support of the western world, whose leaders are publicly accountable and would find it difficult to 'sell' a treacherous policy without a moral alibi. The tactical change from the previous genocidal programme to the more up-to-date 'national liberation of the Palestinian Arabs' fitted the requirements of the case and gradually became the new ideological and practical-political cloak for the same old political aim of the Arabs, i.e. the destruction of Israel.

To demonstrate that the change was a purely cosmetic one, allow me to quote the recently murdered Zuhair Mohsin, a former member of the PLO Executive and head of its 'Military Department': *'It is only for political reasons that we carefully stress our Palestinian identity, for it is in the national interest of the Arabs to encourage a separate Palestinian identity to counter Zionism . . . The establishment of a Palestinian state is a new expedient to continue the fight against Israel . . . After we have attained all our rights in the* whole of Palestine, *we must not postpone . . . the reunification of Jordan and Palestine'* (in the Dutch *Trouw*, 31 March 1977). And the 'moderate' Farouk Kaddumi, head of the PLO 'Political Department': *'We have to be flexible . . . So we have to accept, in this stage, that we have this (Palestinian) state on only part of our territory. But this doesn't mean that we are going to give up the rest of our rights. There are two (initial) phases to our return. The first phase to the 1967 lines, and the second to the 1948 lines . . . the third stage is the democratic state of Palestine* (i.e. the elimination of Israel – my comment)' (*Newsweek*, 14 March 1977). Yasser Arafat, chairman of the PLO, makes no secret of their final aim. A few weeks ago he said: *'Peace for us means the destruction of Israel. We are preparing for an all-out war, a war which will last for generations'* (in the Venezuelan *El Mundo*, 11 February 1980).

In the light of the above, the plan of the 'initiators' of the FCO is quite clear: to help bring about Kaddumi's phase one by pressurising Israel to give up the extremely tiny but strategically vital West Bank area and with it her natural defences and thus open the road to Kaddumi's phase two and finally to phase three.

There is little novelty in either the essence or the tactics of Lord Carrington's 'new initiative'. Its essence is the revival of the old 'anti-Zionism' of the late Foreign and Colonial Offices (well documented in recent British political literature). Its form follows the old bit-by-bit salami tactics (as outlined by Kaddumi) applied by Hitler, with the help of Chamberlain and Daladier, against Czechoslovakia. A good example for Lord Carrington to follow. The only difference being that then it was in the name of 'justice for the Sudeten Germans' and now it is in the name of 'justice for the Palestinian Arabs'. Then the casualty was democratic Czechoslovakia, now the intended casualty is democratic Israel.

Harsh words, but there is no other feasible explanation as to why Britain should initiate a policy which not only endangers the existence of the sole democracy in the Middle East, but threatens the physical existence of its inhabitants as well. After all, the Arab propensity to violence is no secret. The often heard excuse of oil, especially when Britain is a net exporter, should be dismissed.

The hypocrisy of the 'justice for the Palestinians' argument is clear. The non-stop noise about their 'plight' when, as indicated above, they already possess a national homeland and the parallel deafening silence about the genuine plight of the Kurds, the Armenians and so many others, only reveals the sinister motivation behind the 'initiative'.

I and some others of my generation miraculously survived. Every one of us in my country, young and old, is determined not to provide another lesson of history.

Might I express the hope, Prime Minister, that you will steer your great country from such a shameful course.

Yours sincerely,
(Dr) Pinchas Lazar.
50a Rehov Harofe, Haifa, Israel.

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'each combined army and tank army by a chemical battalion, each division by a chemical company, and each motorised and tank regiment by a chemical platoon.' In other words, equipment like the TMS-65 is standard for the Soviet military. 'Where a Soviet division goes,' says Perry Robinson, 'so too goes all the hardware organic to its formation.'

Other reports began to surface in early March quoting unidentified western diplomats in Islamabad as saying that refugees had described 'metal canisters falling from planes and spewing out blue-green-grey smoke on hitting the ground'. The description of this attack in Kunar province bore more resemblance to the eerie greenish-grey clouds of chlorine used in World War One than any nerve gases, which are anyway colourless.

A case of no smoke without fire? Once again, the allegations were received sceptically by informed military analysts in London. 'There's no firm evidence whatsoever,' said one. 'Dropping nerve agents by canister in the way this report describes is not really one of the games the military plays. The substance is far too tricky. My guess is that they either used tear gas, smoke or perhaps phosphorus.'

SUCH REPORTS certainly have one effect; once launched the smear story is difficult to deflect, and these allegations are likely to cause Moscow deep embarrassment, particularly in its relations to developing countries. But equally important is the impact they have on public and official opinion in the West. 'The stories that talk of the incredible Russian chemical or biological threat never happen in a vacuum,' John Marks, co-author of *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*, told me during the summer. 'They usually indicate that the US Chemical Corps is coming in looking for bigger appropriations. All this intelligence is part of a political context here in Washington.'

Certainly, at the moment, much is at stake for the US Chemical Corps. During the mid-1970s, it came near to being disbanded, its public image badly tarnished by an accident in 1968 in which 6,400 sheep died while grazing 30 miles south of the Army's main chemical testing ground at Dugway, Utah – poisoned by the nerve gas, VX. There was a public outcry because had weather conditions been different the fatal casualties might not have been animals – but the inhabitants of Salt Lake City some 65 miles away. The Chemical Corps also came in for nationwide criticism in 1969 over plans to transport 27,000 tons of toxic chemicals across the United States and dump them in the sea. And, of course, there was also the Vietnam war where American troops used defoliants to strip the jungle.

Now, the Corps is soon likely to win a new-found respectability in the military establishment. The Pentagon has asked Congress to fund development of a new generation of nerve gas weapons to counter what the CIA seems convinced is an accelerating Soviet CW programme. (This US intelligence assessment is by no means established fact. Perry Robinson, for one, believes claims of a Russian CW build-up have 'no solid foundation'. On the contrary, he says, the indications are that production of new CW weapons ceased almost a decade ago.)

The amount of cash the Army would like to see spent in the chemical sector appears huge. One reliable source talks of an unprecedented $1,300 million, which the Chemical Corps hopes to see invested in the procurement of the controversial 'binary munitions.' This weapon contains two relatively harmless components which only combine to form a nerve gas after the munition is fired. The Pentagon sees this as a 'quantum jump in safety' because existing chemical stockpiles are deteriorating and dangerous to transport. Binaries would present few problems at this level, and the Corps feels it might return to grace and favour once public fears are allayed about transportation hazards.

But there are a number of Congressional opponents to this weapons system who believe it could lead to calamity. While small countries are deterred by the hazards of making and stocking nerve gases, they fear the simplicity of binaries could cause an appalling proliferation of chemical weapons among developing nations.

The Afghanistan crisis could help overcome any Congressional doubts about the value of these weapons, and be used to allay the fears of NATO allies such as West Germany which would prefer to have existing supplies of American chemical weapons stockpiled on its territory withdrawn across the Atlantic. Unproven and suspect allegations which have been widely publicised could play an important role in achieving this.

Andrew Lycett

State-backed cartel to end?

SINCE TUESDAY you have been able to buy Post Office approved telephone answering machines for use in your office or home. Until now Post Office approval has been restricted to rented machines and purchases have been against PO regulations. The move could mark the beginning of the end of the way in which the Post Office has promoted and protected a profitable cartel of private British manufacturers of telecommunications accessories. The delay in abandoning this practice may well have damaged the Post Office's and British manufacturers' chances of making the most of the £100 million accessories market.

The cost of the Post Office's slothfulness in responding to consumer preference and technological innovation has been high. Fourteen approved rental companies have supplied the answering machines and made tidy profits from the mandatory three-year leases which have often cost as much as £700, to include servicing, as required by the Post Office. Last year the market leader, Ansafone, a subsidiary of Lord Grade's ATV conglomerate, made profits of over £1 million through this trade.

The protection which the Post Office provided for the cartel meant that there was little incentive for manufacturers to improve their machines in line with technological advance or to price them for the ordinary domestic consumer, according to the needs of the market. As the rental companies admit, the typical hirer of their machines is the medium-sized business which is happy, even eager, to include servicing as part of its overall deal.

In the past couple of years the Post Office and the approved rental companies have had to face competition from small, often unestablished, firms offering cut-price answering machines for sale for less than £100. This has been possible because superior Far Eastern technology incorporating the use of microprocessors has been adapted to the needs of the vast United States telephone market and comes up with a cheap answering machine suitable for the average British home or small business.

Technically, anyone who buys one of these unapproved machines and attaches it to his telephone is guilty of an offence against Post Office regulations. The Post Office can order him or her to remove it on pain of having the telephone line cut off. But so popular have these cheap machines been that the Post Office has had to forgo the satisfaction of prosecuting offenders and to agree to countenancing their sale of machines. Approval is still required but the Post Office has stated that in future it will be quicker and more obliging in processing new applications.

THIS INNOVATION has met with little enthusiasm from either established rental companies – which resent the shake-up of their cartel – or the new cut-price companies, which say that Post Office approval techniques are out-dated and prejudice both their machines and their business. The Post Office gives the impression of standing like an impotent giant, excited by the sleek sexiness of the cheap new technology machines and not quite sure about how to approach them, but guiltily aware of its obligations to its long-term mate, the rental companies, with which it has such a safe and mutually advantageous relationship.

The approved rental companies complain that, although they are not averse to the phasing in of answering machine sales, they have been thoroughly inconvenienced by the speed of the Post Office's decision to allow sales.

The director of a medium-sized approved firm, with sales of around £1m this year, complains that he has 'built up a whole sales policy on the basis of existing Post Office regulations'. He rather lamely infers that the Post Office has left its approved suppliers in the lurch, particularly because it has failed to prosecute answering machine sellers and has therefore given them an important and, what he considers, an illegal leg-up into the £100m a year British telephone accessories market in which he and similar rental companies are currently forbidden to compete as a result of their agreements with the Post Office.

But the small answering machine sales companies argue that there is nothing illegal in their activities. They complain that application for approval (still necessary after 1 April) is being used by the Post Office to favour rental companies and to prevent them – 'the cowboys', as their opponents dub them – from continuing the other sides of their business – the sale of all kinds of telephone accessories from gimmicky Mickey Mouse receivers to sophisticated modulators and demodulators. Post Office approval will force the 'cowboys' to sign an agreement only to supply Post Office approved equipment, among which these accessories are certainly not to be counted.

The 'cowboys' add that Post Office approval for their answering machines will force them to spend unnecessary money converting modern units devised for the American market to British standards which are at least ten years out of date. They complain that over the past few months the Post Office has hounded them and prevented some of them earning a legitimate living. The Post Office argues that although some answering machines available for sale are technically efficient, others are not. It says, incorrectly, that unapproved answering machines connected to the telephone system without Post Office assistance are dangerous because there is a chance they can send main current back down the low voltage telephone line. And it adds, correctly, that some of the cowboy equipment is unable to distinguish signals on the British telephone system such as the beeps from a call box or the Parktone which disconnects a line and should turn a machine off. The Post Office will, from 1 April, sell its own answering machine, thus putting itself in the position of supervising its own machines. The chances of that arrangement surviving under a Tory administration are not strong.

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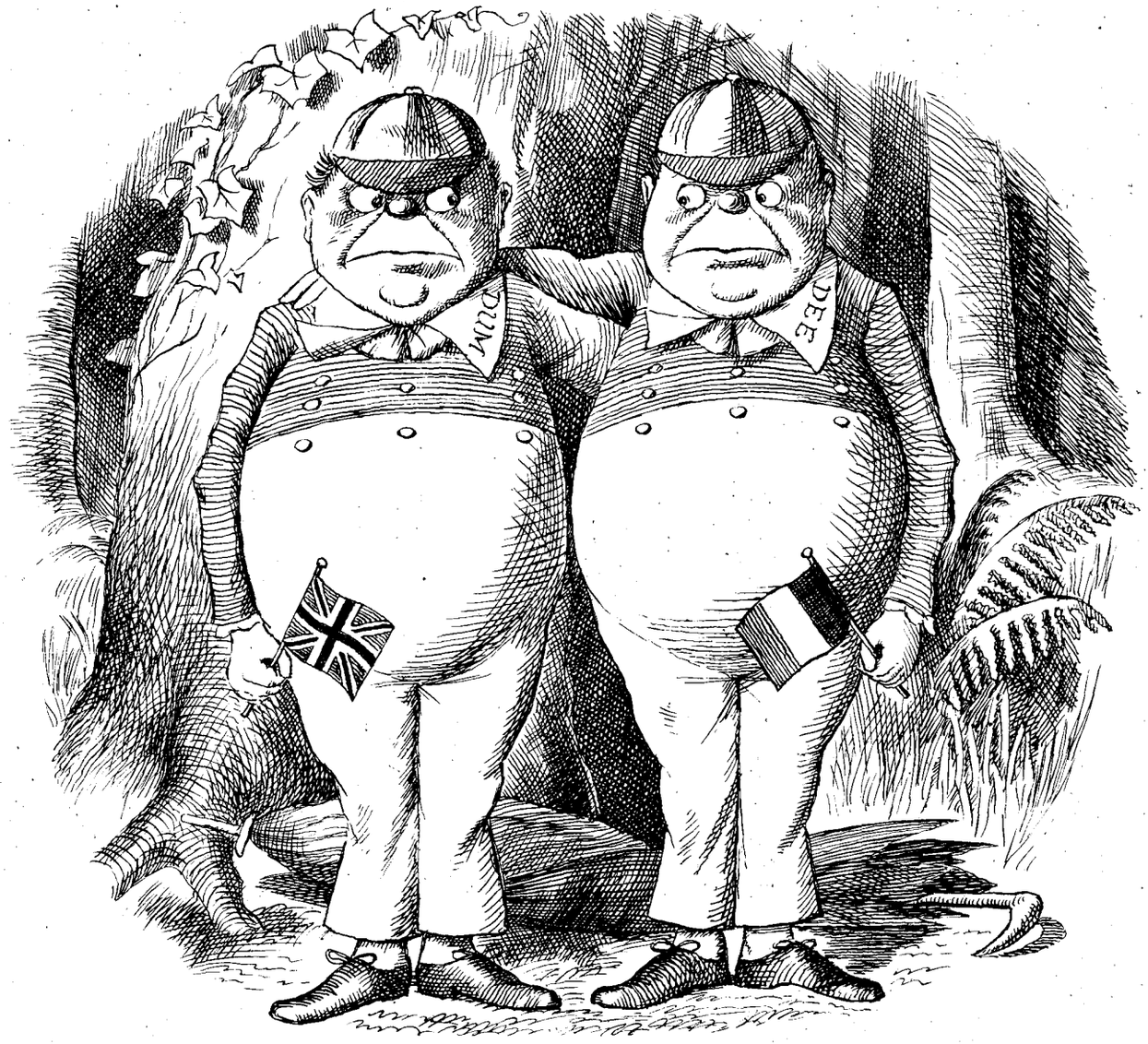

"... the most damaging of all post-war French devices – the Common Agricultural Policy and Common Fisheries Policy – were intended to aggrandise France... they sprang from selfishness as well as hostility."

"Britain, who sees no reason why prawns should be subject to the same treatment as mutton, has blocked every attempt to reach agreement on a common fishing policy."

On the eve of the crucial E.E.C. Summit, the Sunday Telegraph has invited two eminent politicians, one French and one British, to analyse the age-old rivalry between their two countries, and the role that each other's country plays in the Common Market.

Douglas Jay, Labour MP and former Government Minister, sharply criticizes the behaviour of the French in Europe since the formation of the E.E.C.

Maurice Couve de Murville, Gaullist ex-Prime Minister of France, feels that Britain will always be uneasy in Europe and is unable to understand or approve of the French.

You can read both sides of this controversial and highly topical debate in this week's Sunday Telegraph.

Sunday Telegraph

With Telegraph Sunday Magazine-18p

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Fighting for survival

A year ago in the *Australian Magazine*, British newspaper pundit Peregrine Worsthorne wrote: 'At first glance it looks as if the main street in Alice Springs is littered with untidily-stacked black plastic bags, all lying higgledy-piggledy on the pavement, their contents spewing out – like London during the dustmen's strike. But a closer look shows them to be groups of Aborigines squatting outside the bars waiting for opening time.' The article continues in similar vein, to establish that the aborigines are a mystical bunch of illiterates not well served by progressive governments which give them back their land, especially when there are valuable minerals underneath. In Worsthorne's view the fate of the aborigines is sealed by the white man's 'superior culture and technology'. Some aborigines take a different view, and Garry Foley, an organiser for the National Aboriginal Liberation Front, arrives in London shortly to find premises for the Aboriginal Information Centre*. H. O. NAZARETH reports.

IN 1770, CAPTAIN COOK hoisted the British flag and took possession of Australia's East coast in the name of King George III. He had already had dealings with several Aboriginal nations there, but he declared it 'a waste and uninhabited' land. This act of expediency reduced to British subjects people belonging to over 500 Aboriginal nations in clearly defined territories, who had lived there for over 40,000 years. Neither their sovereignty nor their rights to land were recognised. To make the point two hundred and seven years later, three Aborigines planted their flag at Dover and claimed all of England.

Until Captain Cook arrived the Aborigines lived in virtually perfect harmony with their environment. The land played a fundamental part in their culture. Even the way they obtained sustenance and prepared food were linked with religious rites. They believed that ancestral spirits created the land to be shared with other creatures; that these spirits lived in rocks and trees and other sites; that they themselves were part of the land, of nature. The settlers threatened their survival as much as their culture. Today the mining companies take over where the pastoralists stopped.

The Aborigines waged a guerrilla war against the dispossession of their land until the 1930s when a spate of massacres forced them to stop. They had been slaughtered, enslaved, raped and hanged. Some had died of starvation, or from 'gifts' of food mixed with strychnine. Many survived the brutality only to succumb to disease that the invaders brought: leprosy, tuberculosis, trachoma (which often results in total blindness), VD, colds, among others. By 1876, Truganini, Tasmania's last full-blooded Aboriginal was dead, though mixed-blood people, often the offspring of rape, still maintain the cultural traditions. In 1936, Aborigines in North Queensland fighting for their land were still chained by the neck and walked 50 miles to be shipped to Palm Island Aboriginal Prison where many died. And a letter in the *Northern Territory Standard* in 1938 proudly declared: 'Have killed 37 ("niggers") to date.'

In 1946 the British tested radioactive missiles at Woomera across 1200 miles of the supposedly uninhabited central Australian desert on which hundreds of Aborigines lived. They later buried plutonium waste at Maralinga, South Australia. It was removed in 1967, but the *Australian Financial Review* in October 1978 reported high levels of radioactivity in the topsoil there. The Australian government merely staked warning notices, meaningless to non-literate Aborigines.

This behaviour is symptomatic of Australian attitudes to Aborigines. Whites alternate between pushing a crude Darwinist 'survival of the fittest' and the civilising mission of Christianity. *The World and Its People*, a geography reader (published by Nelson) still in use in schools, has passages like these: 'The blackfellows form one of the lowest races of mankind in existence . . .' 'They are fast disappearing before the onward march of the white man.'

Missionaries at Jigalong Mission still believed in the 1960s that Aborigines were 'the children of Satan lost in darkness'. School children are still taught that Captain Cook was the first person to land on Australian shores.

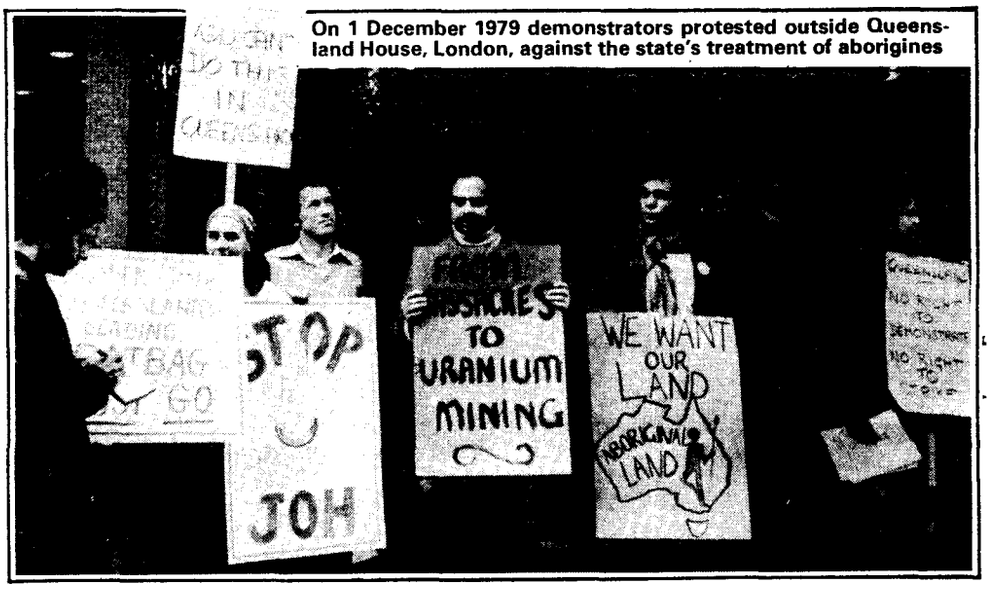
As late as 1967, the Aussie government held a referendum on whether Aborigines should be accepted as citizens: 89 per cent voted 'yes' but Aborigines remained marginal. The policy of assimilation, launched in 1951, which amounted to suppression of Aboriginal culture, was officially abandoned in 1971. But only lip-service is paid to 'integration of Aboriginal people into the community upon the basis of respect for their culture and traditions'. Queensland has stuck openly to its racist assimilation policy, and there are signs that other states tend that way too.

Whitlam's Labour Government was the first to act at all positively. It initiated the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Bill, to help Aboriginals reassert ownership of land in NT which was then under Federal control. Whitlam also halted all mining in the NT and set up an elected National Aboriginal Consultative Committee, but resisted giving real power to the NACC to administer its own people's affairs. The powerful mining lobby representing British, Australian, and other multinational interests became alarmed. This was partly responsible for Whitlam's removal from power. Fraser assumed the premiership, watered down and the NT Land Rights Bill before it was passed, slashed funds to the Aboriginal Land Fund Commission, and later granted self-government to the NT thus creating obstacles for Aboriginal land claims.

ON 7 AUGUST 1979, the newly constituted National Aboriginal government set up a tented capital on Capital Hill, Canberra. After Fraser made his sententious speech at the Lusaka Commonwealth Conference, denouncing racism in Southern Africa, the Aboriginal writer Kevin Gilbert, of the Aboriginal government, wrote him an open letter: '. . . we shuddered with contempt at your hypocrisy.' He quoted '. . . the Royal Australian College of Ophthalmologists report which states "Aboriginal groups . . . are outside any effective Austrialian health system" Overall, two in every five Aboriginals have trachoma . . . .' In the NT and WA (Western Australia) one in four Aboriginals over the age of 60 is blind.

'A third of all Aboriginal children suffer from hearing loss as a result of middle ear infection and perforation, as many as one in every 25 Aborigines examined by the Trachoma Programme had evidence of skin disease. There are some 15,000 Aborigines with leprosy and the disease is not under control . . .' The average life span of an Aboriginal male in NSW (New South Wales) is estimated at 38.

'Aborigines suffer the highest rate of convictions in the courts, while totalling only 1% of the general Australian population. The proportion of Aborigines in prison is 30% of the population and unemployment is 90% of the Aboriginal population.'



On 1 December 1979 demonstrators protested outside Queensland House, London, against the state's treatment of aborigines

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Carolyn Johns/Australasian Express

Left: Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser; right: Queensland Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen

Fraser's reply was paved with good intentions. 'Your statistics on the proportion of Aboriginals in prison and of the unemployed are inaccurate, but I concede that there is no room for complacency in either area.' Fraser's plans to put Australia in the superpower league tie him closely with uranium and other mining interests. This January, construction of a uranium enrichment plant was announced. A nuclear plant is being built in Gippsland, linked with a dam at Erica, east of Melbourne. At the same time Federal budgeting for Aboriginal recovery has fallen steadily from 0.90 per cent of the total budget in 1974/75 to 0.57 per cent in 1978/79.

Fraser's major cutback in grants to Aboriginal housing associations and cooperatives has halted badly needed housing. And cuts in Aboriginal health funding have shown their impact on infant morality. The NT official figure for aboriginals jumped from 52.8 per thousand in 1976 to 74.6 per thousand in 1977 (as against the general population figure of 12.3 per thousand). In other states it varies from 4 to 10 times the rate for the total population. In 1977, the Federal Minister of Health, Mr Hunt, tried to ban the Trachoma Programme in his NSW electorate until after the election because he did not want any embarrassing publicity on Aboriginal health.

On 21 November 1979, Neville Bonner, a part-Aboriginal Senator, introduced the Aboriginal Development Commission Bill on behalf of the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Of 10 Executive members, five would be appointed by the government, and the National Aboriginal Conference would finally be given statutory recognition. Bonner also mentioned in passing that only a few years ago he had to get permission to leave the Palm Island Aboriginal Reserve (once a prison). The Bill, he said, would enable Aborigines to control their own lives, taking over from the Department of Aboriginal Affairs (DAA). But while the DAA were allocated $125 million for 1979/80 the Aboriginal Development Commission Bill proposes to put under the Commission's control less than a tenth of the money given to the DAA.

Because of the legal provisions in the Northern Territory Aboriginal land claims are most numerous there. NT's Chief Minister Everingham makes many speeches supporting Aboriginal land rights, but his government has consistently appealed, sometimes as far as the High Court, against the decisions of the Lands Commissioner and the DAA, on grounds of prior claims, land freeze provisions, or technicalities. In March 1979, the boundaries of all the NT towns – Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Tennany Creek – were extended far beyond even anticipated future requirements in order to thwart land claims falling within these areas. So far not a single freehold claim has been registered.

The DAA's tendency to grant pastoral rather than freehold title causes further problems. In 1975, for example, Whitlam handed over title deeds for 1250 sq.miles of land to a tribal elder 'as proof in Australian law that these lands belong to the Gurindji people and . . . that we restore them to you and your children forever.' On 17 September 1979, the delegate of the NT Minister for Lands wrote to the Gurindji that the NT 'intends after twenty-eight days of giving this notice to forfeit the above lease due to your failure to comply with certain conditions of the above lease.' In the end the Gurindji defended their use of land and obtained an extension of time until next June.

The Aboriginal Legal Service compiled evidence of NT police shootings, brutality, cell beatings and false arrests, which persuaded the Whitlam government to appoint a Royal Commission to investigate the Alice Springs police force. Whitlam was sacked before it could be constituted. The Fraser government publicly cancelled the commission. Ninety per cent of all arrests in the NT are of Aborigines, though they comprise only a quarter of its 86,000 (1976) population.

Professor Hollows, who conducted the Trachoma Programme, is reported to have said in 1977: 'If the Northern Territory Medical Service treated animals the way they treat the blacks, the RSPCA would be on to them.' A film on Aboriginal blindness in the NT was cancelled by the Federal Director-General of Health 'because it might damage the Territory's tourist trade'. In the film, Professor Hollows said that one in 30 NT Aborigines had leprosy, and one in 20 had VD.

In July 1979, a racist white organisation, 'Citizens for Civilised Living', led by a solicitor, Ted Skuse, opposed a Special Housing Project for Aborigines in Alice Springs. The NT government had already halved the number of houses to be built from 20 to 10. By circulating stories of 'dirty, thieving blacks' and of impending collapse of property values, the rednecks succeeded in getting the authorities to abandon even half-constructed houses, though Aboriginal families are forced to live in the streets.

ABORIGINES IN the NT and other states get velvet glove treatment compared to conditions in Queensland, where the iron fist is bared. The 1978/79 Annual Report presented to the Queensland Parliament by the Department of Aboriginal and Islander Affairs attacks the Federal government for even the lip-service paid to Aboriginal control of their own affairs. The thoroughly-documented book *From Massacres to Mining* by Janine Robert has this to say:

> The (Queensland) Aborigines Act of 1971 is administered by a Director of Aboriginal Advancement (sic) responsible only to the Minister. The law makes the Director a virtually omnipotent figure to blacks. He appoints the managers to Reserves – or else permits a church to appoint the manager. All managers are white.
>
> Each Reserve *may* have an Aboriginal council of five: two of these are appointed by the Director, the other three are elected. But he may appoint all five if he deems those elected to be unsuitable. He can veto all candidates. The council in no way represent the Aborigines' own authorities on the Reserve but is more an attempt to supplant the elders. It is responsible, not to the Aborigines, but to the Director.

The Queensland Government refuses to

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recognise any Aboriginal rights to land. Even where blacks have succeeded in purchasing cattle-stations, these can be taken away 'in the interests of the state.' The National Party in Queensland is headed by Joh Bjelke-Petersen. He is Premier as a result of systematic gerrymandering, despite obtaining as little as 17 per cent of the vote. Bjelke and his government's treatment of Aborigines has been severely criticised in a discussion paper issued recently by the Federal Commissioner of Community Relations. On 8 November 1977, *The Age* reported that Bjelke vetoed the Trachoma Programme in Queensland on the grounds that two Aboriginal field assistants were 'enrolling Aborigines to vote'. Professor Hollows, who was conducting the programme, said: 'They are the best two field workers we have ever had. The eye health problems of Aborigines here are so horrific.' *The Queensland government was reported to* have insisted that the programme would only be resumed if Aboriginal members of the team were sacked and replaced by its own appointees. In August 1979 the BBC filmed half-constructed houses in which blacks were living in Weipa. Bjelke had been given a Federal housing grant, and he had returned $3 million on the grounds that the housing programme had been completed (before the film was made).

The Queensland Aborigines Act 1971 also empowers the payment of less than award (minimum) wages. By Regulation 69 (1), an Aboriginal is *permitted* by application to the District Officer to be deemed a 'slow worker' which entitles him to work for less than award wages.

QUEENSLAND HAS about one-third of the Aboriginal population of Australia, estimated by its government at 57,000 and at 41,345 by the 1976 census. Its policy of 'assimilation', Janine Roberts points out, is the other side of the *apartheid* coin. It was evolved: '1. To secure all of Australian lands and minerals in white hands. 2. To make Aborigines live as whites – and thus possibly to make them into workers. 3. To eventually remove all signs of a distinctive Aboriginal race and leave Australia white. Like *apartheid*, it is aimed at maximising the white standard of living – at maximising the profits to be made from blacks and their land.' The Queensland government contradicted their own assimilation policy in March 1978 by declaring Mornington Island, and Aurunkun, 'shires'. The blacks in these two areas had strongly resisted attempts to move them in the interests of mining companies. These Queensland *Bantustans* were created to put them outside Federal land rights legislation, weak as that is. And the Federal Minister of Aboriginal Affairs officiated at the institution of the shires. The present Minister Fred Chaney says of Queensland, 'It's not a policy I would pursue, but I find it acceptable.'

The connection between the Queensland government and mining interests is particularly conspicuous. Comalco, who conduct the biggest mining operations in Queensland, is controlled by Kaiser Aluminium (45 per cent) and Conzinc Riotinto of Australia (45 per cent). CRA in turn is 80.6 per cent owned by UK's Rio Tinto Zinc. A substantial part of the 10 per cent shares remaining are owned by Sir Colin Hannah (Queensland governor), Sir Gordon Chalk (ex-Liberal leader) and Bjelke's wife Flo. Comalco's declared policy towards Aborigines coincides closely with that of the Queensland government. Comalco also emphasise paying royalties for the benefit of Aborigines into a consolidated fund which is controlled by the Queensland government. Comalco have failed to discuss any matters with the North Queensland Land Council which represents most Aborigines, on the grounds that it is not a statutory authority. They have preferred to consult with Government-appointed Aboriginals, and insist on negotiating with the legal owners of the land.

Comalco, and its principal RTZ, repeatedly deny any interference in Aboriginal Affairs, or disruption of the Aborigines' life-style, but on 7 November 1977, *The Age* in Melbourne published a report: 'A detailed study of 39 Aboriginal Reserves to assess their mineral potential has been carried out by a wholly-owned subsidiary of CRA.' 'A memorandum dated 15 December 1976 . . . lists the Reserves in order of importance as "exploration targets." 'Eight Reserves with good to excellent mineral potential were listed in the first group and described as "prime targets which should be given top priority in our future programme".'

Comalco's actions vary little from those of other multinational mining interests. The few constraints put upon the multinationals do not apply to Australian mining companies. As the richest Australian mining magnate of them all, Lang Hancock, says: 'Hands off the mining industry . . . and while we're at it the government must protect the companies from any sorts of claims by Aborigines, by minority groups in the form of trouble-makers like environmentals . . . mining must be made paramount'. (*New Internationalist,* No. 77, July 1979).

It is a sentiment that the Queensland government shares and is already implementing. In September 1977, Bjelke banned street demonstrations. Since then, over 2,000 people have been arrested and convicted for demonstrating. In October 1979, by the Essential Services Act, strikes were made illegal if the government declared the affected industry 'an essential service'. Strike funds are illegal in any case.

FOR THE ABORIGINAL population, land has become the focal point of struggle. Ever since the large-scale mining of tribal land mainly for bauxite, uranium, and diamonds threatened to destroy their land and culture, tribal Aborigines have fought for land rights. In 1969 they took Nabalco to court when they began to strip-mine 80 sq. miles of Arnhemland (NT). But the white man's law, as handed down by Justice Blackburn, declared that in Australia the law 'is without regard to any communal native title.' Aurukun Aborigines, fighting a consortium of Shell, Pechiney and Tipperary, won their case in the Queensland Supreme Court, only to lose before the Privy Council in London.

Tribal Aborigines have now organised themselves on the reserves. The findings of the Woodward Commission led to statutory recognition of their Northern and Central Land councils. But the Queensland government refused to accord the same to the North Queensland Land Council which represents about 60,000 Aboriginal people. The Land Councils have helped establish the Outstation Movement which runs over 100 cattle-stations and small industries on tribal lands throughout the country. The movement is strongest in Arnhemland where there are more than 60 outstations. These decentralised communities demonstrate their ability and preparedness to adapt, but on their own terms. They have succeeded in attracting Aborigines from the settlements and reserves. According to Aboriginal Medical and Legal Services, and to the Office of Community Relations, Aboriginal physical and mental health on the outstations is appreciably better than elsewhere. Alcohol abuse, which is rife in the crowded and insanitary conditions of the settlements, is low and ascribed to a rise in black self-esteem.

One outstation, the Utopia cattle-station, has been vilified by the Australian press but even the Federal Minister for Aboriginal Affairs felt obliged to protest: 'The content of some of these press articles would indicate that the property was in poor shape economically. I have visited it and while the approach to running the property may be different from the single family operation with which we are familiar (and how could it not be when some 350 persons are concerned), the basic equipment used to operate the cattle station is being cared for, and the property is generating income which will mean that no government grant will be sought in 1979/80'. (Speech in Parliament 29 April 1979.)

The Aboriginals on missions and settlements were regarded by whites as people they were 'civilising' and preparing for the industrialised world. As a result of the development of the Outstation Movement, residence in settlements has been falling. And many experienced workers in stockyards and pastoral jobs have also left to join their people on outstations. In the settlements, blacks, who, according to custom, were expected to keep away from certain other clans, were forced to live together, which led to physical and mental health problems, alcoholism and violence, caused by the lack of housing – sometimes living in rusty car-bodies, or humpies (shacks) – lack of sewerage and water facilities, and unhealthy and crowded conditions. But, taking a cue from their fellow blacks in the tribal lands and the cities, they are demanding control of their living areas, the right to run their own lives.

For the urban blacks, living in city ghettoes, hit by poor housing, exceedingly high unemployment, poor health, police brutality, the land represents an economic base for their people. They tend to be the most politically aware Aborigines. Free Aboriginal legal and medical services were initiated by blacks based in Sydney and Melbourne. They received Whitlam's support and were funded by his government, but after Fraser's entry on the scene funds have been cut and a large number of legal and medical services they provide have had to be dismantled. Fraser forces the legal and medical services to depend on royalties from mining, in the hope that their opposition to mining will change.

Urban blacks set up the Aboriginal Embassy in 1972 which brought international attention to their situation. The National Aboriginal Government establishment in August 1979 on Capital Hill has helped unify all three groupings of Aboriginal people. They are now considering the usefulness of putting the Aboriginal case before the International Labour Organisation and/or the International Court of Justice. The Aborigine's communal life-style is fundamentally anti-capitalist, and their survival as a race depends on it.

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London Diary

☐ If, as I was always brought up to believe, principles are like bayonets (for standing by rather than falling back upon) then the question arises – what of the Tory 'moderates'? There's a lot of brave talk to be heard at parties and in restaurants 'she's gone too far this time', that sort of thing – but nobody seems actually to exhibit the necessary testicularity in public. Rather like Labour's famous right-wingers, the Tory 'sceptics' will do anything to stay within the agreeable smell of a government job. I've been re-reading Keith Middlemas's *Politics In Industrial Society*, which is essentially a Tory study of the years since 1911. Discussing the Thatcher element in the party he writes:

> Above all, the anti-trade union, anti-corporate, anti-bureaucratic element in the party was strengthened, far more than at earlier times such as Powell's ill-directed campaign on immigration or the anti-EEC movement. It mattered little to this sector that they looked back to a golden age, somewhere before 1914, which was a sheer archaism, given intellectual coherence only by the fashion for monetarism with which it happened to coincide.

All true, and deadly dangerous. I repeat – where are the rebels? What became of those expensive educations in the virtues of 'leadership'?

☐ Talking of which, I have distressing news from Eton. In an article written for the current *Eton College Chronicle*, a boy named Jonathan Bond complains that the school's nuclear fall-out shelter is not big enough. It seems that until recently the very existence of the shelter was a secret, but it is a finely reinforced 'man-made rabbit warren'. Fine, that is, for 500 people. What, asks Bond, of the remaining 700 unlucky ones? 'Recent political events' he goes on 'demand that the school make the necessary provision, and conversion where appropriate, to ensure that every member of the school would have a place in some sort of nuclear shelter.' I'm not sure quite what it is about this article that gets me down. It is difficult to object, for instance, to Bond's call for the implementation of a comprehensive system. And he is obviously a friend of investigative journalism – the Peter Laurie, as it were, of Windsor. I think it must be the fatalism in one so young which is depressing; the same sleep-walking resignation which is displayed by our 'Civil Defence' authorities, who make private plans for the state to outlive the people. One's rage and disgust at this is so intense that one almost *wants* to see them scrabbling and clawing for a place in the bunker. I'm glad I won't be at Eton when it happens though – how salutary that they will be streaming their pupils right up to the very last moment. 'I'm just going outside . . . I may be some time . . .'

☐ Indeed, the next one won't be the sort of war that gets won on the playing fields of Eton. One thing that strikes me about it is the impossibility (for the first time in history) of conscientious objection. We are all conscripted, permanently and automatically. There isn't even the soldier's right of appeal under Queen's Regulations. And no volunteers either. I read a very good war-fever story in the latest edition of that excellent American magazine *The Nation*. It seems that Mr Fred Grab of Tarrytown, New York, turned on his television a few nights ago to watch episode three of a series about the Russo-German war of 1941-45. Instead, he found himself viewing a chunk of Milton Friedman on 'Free to Choose', which had been shown the previous night. Mr Grab protested to the television station about this infringement of his own freedom of choice. The management told him that, since there was a widespread view that the United States would soon be fighting the Soviet Union, it was felt inappropriate to screen any material which showed the Red Army in a favourable light. I just thought I'd pass this on.

☐ I'm in the queue for the new Graham Greene. My appetite for it has been sharpened by a recent exchange on another matter between Greene himself and Anthony Burgess. I think they may have come up with something we have long wanted – which is a solution to the Auberon Waugh problem. Greene was discussing Evelyn Waugh with Burgess, who admitted to a fear of the old ogre.

> *AB*: I remain scared even of his shade. If he had a son I suppose I'd be scared of him too.
> *GG*: He has sons.
> *AB*:I never knew that. What do you think of the present state of the novel in English?

Neat; even if I do seem to remember a slightly unkind Waugh review of a recent Burgess effort. If we could all agree to behave as if the man did not even exist, that could be the answer.

☐ In politics and in journalism, there are two kinds of people. The first kind are generous with contacts, hospitality and information, whether you are important personally to them or not. The second kind are the second kind. George Hutchinson, who died last week after a very painful struggle with cancer, was pre-eminently one of the first. He was always very helpful to me, although he must have known that we were never likely to agree on anything and as a result I learned a little about the Tory Party. A few weeks ago he went out of his way to introduce me to Harold Macmillan – a gesture which I appreciated highly. 'Unfailing courtesy' is an over-worked phrase, but it always seemed to occur to one in connection with George.

☐ One of the heartening things about the birth of Zimbabwe is the number of excellent people who have returned there from exile. Naomi Mitchison, who wrote to us from Zambia this week about the impact of the Mugabe election on the other side of the Zambesi, points out that Chief Tangwena has been made a senator in Salisbury. 'It was he who so stubbornly and bravely fought and suffered for his people, turned out from their ancestral homes to make way for white ranch-farming, much as Highland villagers were evicted, the thatch equally burned over their heads, by similar landlords two hundred years ago.' She also points out that small changes become visible every day – 'We notice that Radio Rhodesia gives us less of its *thé dansant* pre-news music and plummy ladies, and that those who used to be "terrorists" are now "dissidents".' The worry, though, in Zambia is that 'Zimbabwe with its big export crop, its tobacco and maize and fruit, its chrome mines, its working industries and perhaps now its peace, will race ahead and leave Zambia a little bit stranded, a poor relation.' There is news, too, of the Roman Catholic Archbishop Malingu, who has been forbidden by his ecclesiastical superiors to hold healing sessions. Zambian hospitals are crowded enough; the Archbishop doesn't do any harm, and many people swear by him. If dead saints can do it in Europe, why should Africans be excluded? So runs her argument. I think I still prefer my medicine orthodox.

☐ The mere suggestion that our new Archbishop might be capable of healing anybody would, of course, make the rafters ring with hilarity. We were puzzled to read recently, in a tender *Spectator* profile of Dr Runcie, that he 'acknowledged the significance of a remark made to him recently by Bruce Page, editor of the NEW STATESMAN'. This remark was given as 'All the C of E has ever done is to neutralise people's religious impulses'. Not only did Bruce not recall the comment – he couldn't ever recall meeting the splendid figure of Runcie at all. Then it came back to him. He did bump into a clerical gentleman ('looking like a cheery stockbroker') at the BBC not long ago. He told him that he admired the Church of England as a device for the abolition of religion. There is also, of course, the question of the bench of bishops in the House of Lords, and the little matter of Article 38 of the Thirty-Nine, which states 'The riches and goods of Christians are not common . . . as certain Anabaptists do falsely boast.' Typical Tory smear, that. The Anabaptists were a notoriously vicious and violent crew. Common ownership was certainly not their invention.

☐ Even though Mrs Thatcher has loused up the argument so badly, I'm still in favour of boycotting the Moscow Olympics. But what about this, from last week's *Rand Daily Mail*? Under the headline 'A Cash Bonanza from Lions' Tour', the paper reports that 'the British Lions' tour to South Africa will precipitate a 20m Rand (about £10m) cash bonanza for the Republic.' After gleefully detailing the various spin-offs, the *RDM* went on to celebrate the deal between Cliff Morgan of the BBC and the South African Broadcasting Corporation. In view of the Corporation's recent piety about Moscow, I found that bit especially hard to take.

Christopher Hitchens

This England

Prizes: £3 book token for first entry, £2 tokens for others printed. Paste entries on a postcard.

☐ Peter Hardy, the MP for Rother Valley, has an elderly constituent who had a hospital appointment. 'The person was confused when the staff used the continental seven,' he said. 'I do not believe we should adopt all these continental practices. The French should learn to write numbers far more clearly.' – *Sheffield Star* (Matthew Barley)

☐ British baronet Sir William Pigott-Brown was acquitted on drug charges after telling a court he was given a flask containing cocaine by a relative of the King of Bhutan to ease toothache while bear-hunting. – *Luton Evening Post* (Tim Hopkins)

☐ Did God invent nuclear warfare? If so, who are we to oppose God's divine will? – Letter in *Daily Telegraph* (Stephen Corrin)

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LETTERS to the EDITOR

Just candour

From Malcolm Wright

The Law Lords' ruling in the case of Waugh v British Railways may have repercussions much further afield than even Rob Rohrer dared to hope (NS 7 March). Later this year Lord Edmund Davies's dictum that 'Justice is better served by candour' will again be tested in the High Court when Mr Bill Bell, of Darlington, seeks disclosure of documents against the Ministry of Defence following the death of his son Wayne in November 1978.

Trooper Wayne Bell died of a brain haemorrhage at a civilian hospital in Heessen, West Germany, three days after a barrack-room fall. It took Army medics six hours to get him to a civilian hospital at Paderborn after the fall and on the admission of the Ministry of Defence he was during those hours dumped in a bath of cold water and dragged round outside a guardroom in a vain attempt to revive him. Mr Bill Bell was refused entry to a subsequent Army Board of Inquiry and not allowed legal representation. Under Queen's Regulations the Ministry of Defence has argued that only a brief summary of events after the accident need be released to the parents. In fact two summaries – both different – have been given to Mr Bell. They differ widely from evidence he collected himself in a trip to West Germany last year. Independent medical testimonies indicate that Wayne Bell had a skull fracture which a military post mortem managed not to find.

Access to medical and military evidence given at the Board of Inquiry has constantly been refused, though Defence Under Secretary Barney Hayhoe's pledge to review Board of Inquiry procedures is a tacit admission that all is not well on the West German front. That may help relatives who in the future find themselves deprived of the real truth about the death of kin serving abroad. But the Government's official view of the Wayne Bell case, following an adjournment debate on 1 November, is that it is well and truly closed. And that for Mr Bell means an expensive court battle against the MoD seeking disclosure of those documents and witness statements from the Board of Inquiry which so far have remained officially secret.

Northern Echo, PO Box 14, Priestgate, Darlington DL1 1NF

Economic building blocks

From Professor Patrick Minford

Lord Kaldor (NS 14 March) appeals to labour mobility across international frontiers, comparing it with that across county boundaries. Would that it were comparable! Even within the EEC there are considerable practical obstacles to mobility. As for capital mobility, it was assumed in my letter, as Lord Kaldor would have noticed had he read it more attentively. But whatever assumptions are made, of course there are many determinants of an economy's 'output potential'. In enumerating some of them, Lord Kaldor has simply reinforced my point; they are none of them directly related to the government's fiscal and monetary policy. 'Demand-management' is unable to affect an economy's output in the long run (except indirectly, e.g. by raising economic uncertainty). Acceptance of this proposition by macroeconomists, even 'neo-Keynesians', is now so widespread that even Lord Kaldor may have to take some notice of it. The debate now concerns the *length* of the period over which 'stimulative' policies could (transitionally) raise output, and how great a cost in (permanent) inflation is implied by such policies. The evidence of the last decade suggests this trade-off is unfavourable and may have been getting worse.

Lord Kaldor goes on to reiterate his theme of nearly 20 years, that the money supply *cannot* be controlled. He gives no reason but I assume it to be his previous one: an infinite potential for substitution between money and other financial assets. This view has been consistently contradicted by the empirical literature, in which the sensitivity of money demand to interest rates has been found to be significant but rather low (elasticities of 0.5 or below are typical).

Finally, Lord Kaldor maintains that there is no relationship between the PSBR and the money supply on the basis of a simple 'regression' relating them. However, when it is said that the PSBR is the *major* determinant of the money supply, the words mean just that and not that it is the *only* determinant. In particular, changes in interest rates are able in the short run to achieve money supply growth different from the long-term expansion implied by the PSBR. The problem is that interest rates cannot *continuously* be raised to finance a rise in the PSBR, without reaching a tolerance limit, political or otherwise; hence the long-run relationship. The tightness of the relationship in the short run will depend on the possibilities of interest rate variation. Lord Kaldor may refer for example to the simulations of the Treasury model financial sector (Middleton et al, 1979) for evidence that in the absence of interest rate changes a rise in the PSBR under floating exchange rates raises money supply growth.

University of Liverpool, Eleanor Rathbone Building, PO Box 147, Liverpool L69 3BX

Near to home

From Alice Hebgin

Without presuming to assess the sufferings of either Sakharov or D'Arcy I am interested in the assumption Julian Barnes makes that evidence about a spouse is unreliable. I infer that he would not have taken the trouble to write (NS 21 March) informing us that D'Arcy is Arden's wife if he did not think this fact partly discredited the article. On behalf of spouses everywhere I spring to the defence of their integrity and individuality. However, if relationship by marriage is a bar to credibility this letter is itself suspect, as it is possible that I myself might be distantly connected by marriage to Mr Barnes!

29 Oaklands Road, Bexleyheath, Kent

Life's terrace

From Robert Wohl

I should like to bring to the attention of your readers certain misrepresentations of my book, *The Generation of 1914*, made by John Willett in his recent review (NS 21 March). To begin with, the book is not about historiography but about experience and the interpretations that Europeans born in the last two decades of the 19th century gave of their experience. I seek to explain why people born in the 1880s and 1890s were so often inclined to interpret their experience in terms of the generational concept. Mr Willett says that he is bored by generational theory. He is entitled to his likes and dislikes, but my book demonstrates that intellectuals living in Europe during the first third of the 20th century did not share his lack of interest.

At another point, Mr Willett complains that I have left out several people and some countries that were important in the history of the war generation. Again he misses the purpose of my book. I state in my introduction that I propose to treat the generation of 1914 as an idea and to analyse this idea in terms of individuals who identified themselves with it or were identified by others as in some way exemplifying it.

Even more misleading is Mr Willett's suggestion that I do not understand the war's impact on those with left-wing inclinations. I am the author of *French Communism in the Making, 1914-1924*. There he will find treatment of some of the intellectuals whom he misses in *The Generation of 1914*. I saw no need to republish this biographical material.

Mr Willet closes by saying that 'what is historiographically interesting ought never to obscure what is historically true'. This statement may appear reasonable and unobjectionable. In the context of Mr Willett's review, however, it suggests that we should (or could) somehow separate people's history from the meanings they assign to it as they live it. This separation of history from consciousness would be acceptable were it not for the fact that people attempt to translate their ideas into political and social reality.

University of California, Dept of History, Los Angeles, California 90024

Free press

From Claudia Wright

There is no denying that Edward Barrett of the *Columbia Journalism Review* has his own interpretation for the blood on the floor of the magazine (NS 21 March). Roberth Manoff, the dismissed editor, has another. Authors of *CJR* pieces, who have dealt with Manoff and others, have their opinions too. I have listened to them all.

Great sticklers for method and clockwork, the *CJR* group would like to pose as sincere monastics, plodding dutifully, no doubt on some higher authority, at their appointed bi-monthly task. They would have faulted Torquemada himself if his tribunal at Castile had missed a minuscule cue in the interrogation of a single Spanish Jew. Fairness of method, not justice of results, is their watchword. Isn't that the point of the Cabot Awards to *El Mercurio* and the *Gleaner*? If the board has deliberated earnestly, then the awards were bound to be just. What those newspapers have done to foment reaction and political violence in Santiago and Kingston was obviously irrelevant to the credit the Cabot Committee thought they deserved.

There can be no point in substituting facts in Messrs Barrett and Elliott's files for the evidence of their ideological animosities. No matter how true the former may be, they are still an alibi for the latter in this case.

4643 Kenmore Drive West, Washington, DC 20007

A mere parsec

From Gilead Cooper

Your theatre critic, Benedict Nightingale, refers to 'what one hopes was a mere parsec in theatrical time' (NS 21 March). The parsec, however, is not a very small unit of time, but a very large unit of distance, used in astronomy. (It is defined as the distance at which a star would have an annual parallax of one second of arc, and is equivalent to approximately 19×10^{12} miles or 3.09×10^{13} kilometres.)

You might be interested to hear of an improbable-sounding but, I guarantee, perfectly genuine unit of specific gravity, which I once encountered in the literature of wine manufacture. Measured on this scale, your reviewer might be said to be talking 'so many degrees of Twaddell'.

109 Wellesley Court, London W9

Annie augmented

From Gavin Esler

The NS added some information to my article on 'Aunt Annie's Bomb Factory' (NS 21 March) which may have given the wrong impression. The forensic scientist, Mr John Yallop, is not preparing a new paper on the TLC test, nor did he attack at the trial the prosecution's use of the test as incompetent. He simply disagreed with their interpretation of the results, and remained puzzled by the trial verdict.

Grange Valley Green, Ballyclare, N. Ireland

Ms-nomer

From Penny Arnold

I was sorry to see the NS (14 March) was quick to take advantage of a sexist jibe and call Mrs Thatcher 'Attila the Hen'.

Windways, Haulwen Road, Cockett, Swansea

Information wanted

Bevin Boys: memories of and about Bevin Boys. Documents, photographs, etc., will be carefully looked after and returned in due course.

Michael Webber, 19 Netherhall Gardens, London NW3

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FIRST PERSON
Arthur Marshall

Mon Dieu!

There are a number of reasons why 'Myrtlebank' (and for new readers and as I gather that our circulation is rising like a, pardon me, hot-air balloon, 'Myrtlebank' is my house in Devon) does not rely for its heating upon fossil fuels, to use the currently modish words for oil. There is, for one thing, the expense. There is what may be going to happen in The Gulf (nastinesses, and cries of 'Bags I!'). There would have to be, for another thing, an unsightly oil tank dumped down somewhere on my premises, doubtless destroying a pleasing vista of, perhaps, the roof of one of the village shops, its gracious outlines partly visible through a rather overgrown mahonia. There is also the fact that 'Myrtlebank' lies at the foot of a steep and extremely narrow lane down which a motor oil tanker would hardly dare ('No can do, mate') to venture. And having been present, and feeling not unlike the Great Architect in the sky Himself, when stately 'Myrtlebank' was being created from three ancient and, at the time, condemned mill workers' cottages, and having stood by when, in four places, openings for doors were being driven through stone walls five feet thick, I really could not face again the dust and confusion involved in the installation of pipes to carry the oil or the hot water or whatever.

Do we then in winter freeze, you enquire in your solicitous manner, hurriedly deciding not to ask to come and stay? No we do not. Instant heat is kindly provided by SWEB, our South Western Electricity Board and a widely admired body who will cheerfully bankrupt us all in a year or so, and the heat is disseminated by convectors which disgorge warm air at the click of a switch. And in our two large main rooms, both the very last word in luxi-living, there are open fires, than which few things are cosier and which, as regards wood, are supplied by arboreal fatalities in my spacious grounds that surround the dwelling – with here a laburnum going phut, there a chestnut or a may tree kicking the bucket and then getting sawn up for our use by delightful old Mr Bidder from the village, aged 81 and a fine physical example to all apart from a troublesome bunion.

However, there is, in addition to the need to remove ash, restock the log basket and, in the morning, get the fires going, one disadvantage attached to open fires that may not be immediately apparent to everybody. We have, in addition to large lumps of wood, an abundance of shed-stored twigs (something that I am sure Mary Webb refers to as 'a tass of dry kindling'), but to get the twigs going, newspapers are required. 'Myrtlebank' indulges itself in those two very reputable sheets that aren't the *Guardian*, with the result that when I wish to refer to a paper of, say, three days ago, it is usually to find that it is no more, having that very morning gone up usefully in smoke and with a blazing fire to show for it.

And thus it comes about that I have unfortunately been unable to check something really rather weird that I read a few days ago, namely an announcement on that page that lists the movements and general activities of the nobs, together with cheering details of government hospitality – an announcement to the effect that Mr and Mrs Thatcher had thrown a party at No. 10 for 'some entrepreneurs'. The word was so bizarre and unusual and, indeed, so vague and unreal and deeply unsatisfactory, that it stuck in my mind (if I merely dreamt it, I apologise, though I tend not to dream of Downing Street, just reading about it by day being quite sufficient for my needs). Was it 'a group' of entrepreneurs'? Possibly, the word 'group' implying some sort of chummy cohesion. But no details were given: no numbers, no nationalities, no names, no menu, no nothing. And why on earth the French word 'entrepreneur'? We know that it means 'one who undertakes' but mockers must instantly abandon the idea that they were a team of undertakers. One presumed that, in the plural, they were businessmen or contractors or go-betweens, or something.

And then suddenly the truth dawned on me. Our gallant PM was soon to set off for Paris to bargain and attempt to reason with those rascally frogs about our outrageous EEC contributions and, ever conscientious and 'with it', was steeping herself and those about her in a French ambience prior to crossing the Channel (our channel, whatever they may say). What could be wiser? Knowing her, I bet she went full out and who can doubt that in the snug confines of her private quarters, she and what some popular papers refer to as Husband Denis dusted off and brushed up their French conversation in readiness, with cries at breakfast of *'Passez-moi, chéri, la Tip-tree's marmalade'* and, later in the day, *'Sapristi, que je suis fatiguée!'* and *'Ah, mes pauvres vieux pieds!'* What is the opposite, so to speak, of 'to anglicise'? Anyhow, did she do whatever it is with Mr Thatcher's Christian name and give it a frog sound? If you yourself are in doubt (one gets so rusty), let me help you. Say it DUR-KNEE. Thus, her sentences may have begun happily with *'Dis-moi, Dur-Knee'* and, at about 10 a.m. and as ministers start to arrive and car doors slam in Downing Street, *'Ecoute, Dur-Knee, voici le cabinet qui arrive.'* I am not too sure what the French equivalent of 'cabinet' is, and kind though you are, please don't write to tell me as I can safely struggle through to the end of Life's Pathway without garnering this little gem of knowledge. *Cabinet* has, as we know, another and far more useful meaning (*'Un moment, Dur-Knee, je dois aller au cabinet'*).

Which raises the whole question of Mrs Thatcher's French language abilities. If she has, as I suspect, merely a very reputable O Level, after which she hurried on, and why not, to Natural Sciences, then she was mad not to have conducted the whole of her conversations and discussions and interviews in France firmly in French (*'Non, non! Français seulement, j'insiste!'*) The French have always had a deep suspicion and distrust of anybody who speaks their language at all well but, pitiless though they are by nature, one has found in them a sort of amused benevolence towards those haltingly saying *'Où se trouve le Louvre?'* But as it was, what did we see relayed from the French television but a very English lady boldly confronting foreigners and self-confidently providing a fatal and unstoppable flow of English, hateful from the start to European ears and with a ring to it of a gym mistress haranguing an unsatisfactory class. She also made use, and could foolishness go further, of what I think must be rough boxing terms ('We shall go on fighting our corner', she kept saying), a phrase totally baffling to anybody unfamiliar with the world of fisticuffs. This was no way to get results and represented a sad misreading of the French character. And she recklessly reminded everybody of the existence, terminated though it may now be, of General de Gaulle – a disastrous name to bring out in the circumstances.

But with everything conducted in schoolgirl French, what a difference there might have been! To start with, little whimpers of *'Pardon?'* and *'Parlez plus lentement, s'il vous plaît'*. Then simple little direct statements, such as *'Nous n'avons pas beaucoup d'argent'* and *'L'Angleterre est très 'hard up' et 'stoney-broke', comme nous disons familièrement'*. Then, in the frog torrent that would doubtless follow, there could have been little moaning interjections of *'Pas possible'* and *'Ciel!'* and *'Ca ne va pas'*. She could have fluttered a wispy little lace handkerchief, always such a powerful weapon in a female armoury, and dabbed an eye from time to time, with tiny mutterings of *'Je ne suis qu'une femme'*. Perhaps a loud and sudden shriek of *'Au secours!'* would have been going too far, and I rather fancy that those words are the exclusive property of people drowning and are specially reserved for them (*'Attention! Je descends pour la troisième fois!'*). At all events, there was an opportunity here, and one at which a Siddons would have clutched, for some fine dramatic acting. Any woman worth her salt can pretend to swoon and call for water – *'De l'eau!'* – and Mrs Thatcher didn't even do that. The whole thing was sadly muffed. And to those who object that acting plays no part in politics, my answer is 'Really?' Or, if you prefer it, *'vraiment?'*

Roger Woddis

Spirit of the law

'Such a public flogging of a woman would rightly appal the people of Britain.' The Sun, *on the sentence passed on Penelope Arnot for illegally serving alcohol at a party in Saudi Arabia.*

She could not tell you wrong from right
When she was pouring drinks that night,
And hardly knew her actions meant
The prospect of harsh punishment.
Moreover, she was not aware
That Moslem law is different there.
The remnants of a feudal age
Must fill all British hearts with rage,
If not with patriotic hate,
To save her from a horrid fate.

By now we should have realised
These people are uncivilised;
The very thought of giving stick
Makes every decent person sick.
Why can't they do the Christian thing
And cease from this vile torturing?
We may, we hasten to explain,
In certain cases use the cane,
But only when we deem it apt,
Such as the young and handicapped.

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BOOKS IN GENERAL

Helen McNeil

Hag-ography

Gyn/Ecology by MARY DALY *The Women's Press* £8.95 & £3.95

The MsTaken Body by JEANETTE KUPFERMANN *Robson* £5.25

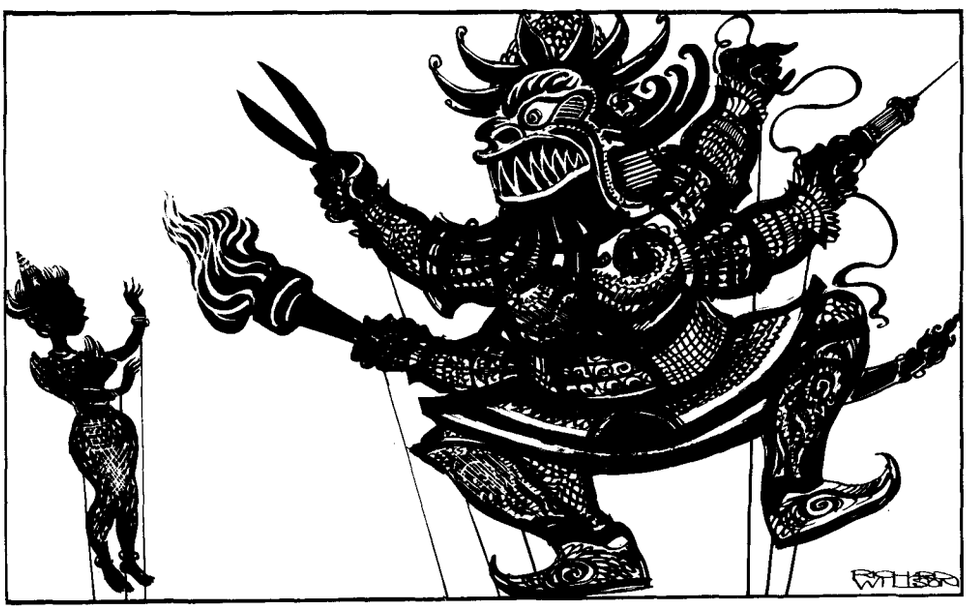
The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender by NANCY CHODOROW *California* £10.50 & £2.95

Mary Daly's *Gyn/Ecology* is about woman as victim; it seethes with rage against the societies and rituals concocted by men to kill 'the Goddess within'. Written to horrify and then to convert, it launches its attack by breaking down barriers between sociological research, mythography, feminist consciousness-raising and self-expression. *Gyn/Ecology* is an important book for its fierceness as much as for its facts, showing how we have barely begun to reassess the mythologies which mutilate women physically and emotionally. It also serves to show – sometimes inadvertently – how long it will take to articulate a feminist consciousness, a process which Daly, quoting Barbara Skerrett, says is akin to 'developing a new organ in the mind'.

Daly begins by sexually politicising language. Throughout *Gyn/Ecology*, words are punned upon, slashed apart and stitched together, and broken down into polemic etymologies. Daly wittily uses 'Hag' throughout for the serious woman, and hag-ography for the study of womankind, ousting the patriarchal hagiography which she attacked in her 1973 *Beyond God the Father*. Unfortunately Daly's verbal play often obfuscates her argument, forcing even what she would call a Revolting Hag Searcher, like this reviewer, to struggle just to make basic sense of passages which as often as not are about the most gross and hideous persecutions of women. Having suffered these outrages, must we now kill ourselves *reading* about them too?

In intention if not always in result, linguistic suspicion is part of the liberating process for Daly. Self-conscious alienation from male orientated language (and what language isn't?) is a necessary step towards realising what Adrienne Rich (who wrote an ecstatic review of *Gyn/Ecology* for the *New York Times* Book Review) calls 'The dream of a common language' of identification between women. The immediate source for Daly's slashes and sutures is Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body*, in which even 'je' must be slashed into j/e because its very neutrality might delude the woman writer into thinking she can forget sexual difference even for a moment. Wittig was sexualising part of a debate about linguistic inauthenticity and repression being carried on in France by Roland Barthes and his followers. At times Daly's etymologies do look uncannily like the 'traces' and erasures in *Writing and Difference* and *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida (whom Daly doesn't mention). Too often, however, Daly uses the slash lazily, to juxtapose obvious or unexamined alternatives, and her arbitrary capitalisations and words in inverted commas betray a polemic which hasn't been able to reach direct expression.

The core of *Gyn/Ecology* is the study of five tortures of women: Indian *suttee*, Chinese footbinding, African female circumcision and infibulation (cutting off the clitoris and *labia minora* and sewing together the vaginal opening), European witchburning and contemporary American gynaecology. These tortures are physical, but Daly convincingly shows how each is supported by a patriarchal pattern of ethical reversals. Sadism and repression are described as purification, and ceremony diverts attention from the victim's agony. Male responsibility is erased by



appeals to custom and by the use of women torturers. In fact, the Chinese mother must break and bend her daughter's foot bones into 'lotus hooks' if she is to marry in a foot-fetishist society; the Indian widow must burn herself alive or be cast out to starve. Most of these rituals mimic hierarchy, beginning as aristocratic perversions and spreading down. The life without sexual pleasure which once was exclusive to the circumcised wives of Pharaohs is now suffered by the lowliest African Muslim women. Circumcision and infibulation are actually on the increase, thanks to modern anaesthetics and the expansion of Islam, abetted by a Western cultural relativism which conveniently confuses the deep needs of a society with the sick customs of the sex that runs that society.

Daly is at her virulent best when slashing at researchers who legitimise atrocities by 'objective' descriptions. Thus mythologist Joseph Campbell grotesquely decides that the woman burnt alive in *suttee* 'is not only good and true in the ethical sense but true and real ontologically . . . at one with her true being'. American gynaecologists refer to a normal event in every woman's life as 'untreated menopause', and treat it either with carcenogenic hormones or by hysterectomy, an operation which, according to Daly, causes more deaths than the cancers it is supposed to prevent.

Gyn/Ecology's substitition of sexual politics for ideology weakens her treatment of contemporary society. Where Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis* (1976) and Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English's *Complaints and Disorders* (1973) link the sexual politics of medicine with the economic and social self-aggrandisement of the medical profession and with uncontrolled (and profitable) technological interference with the body, Daly sees male sexual sadism as the only significant motive. Indeed, for Daly, society (inevitably patriarchal) often appears to exist solely to give structure to male hatred of women. *Gyn/Ecology* abjures androgyny as a goal, and mocks those women who hope for partnership with what Daly, quoting Robin Morgan, sardonically calls the 'exceptional' man. Whatever Daly's personal politics, *Gyn/Ecology* is an anti-social book. Also, despite its concluding call for women to Spook/Speak, Spin and Search, *Gyn/Ecology* is obsessed with the enemy, less a book about women than about what men do to women.

Gyn/Ecology's fierce evidences look all the more convincing when set against Jeanette Kupfermann's *The MsTaken Body*. Kupfermann's anecdotes provide one of the more palatable instances of the self-advertisement endemic to so-called 'moderate' feminine theory (witness Stassinopoulis's *The Female Woman*) and she dutifully lists her readings, but her book naively confounds her own inhibitions and lack of self-knowledge with the female condition in general. An ex-model girl who can't decide whether glamour is good or bad, a Ph.D. in anthropology who envies her Hasidic women subjects the pleasures of having their heads shaved, feeling ritually unclean half the month, and being traditionally under-educated and excluded from knowledge of their religion, and an instructor in natural childbirth who feels embarrassed by the intimacy of birth with the father present, Kupfermann genuinely seems to feel that any old order is all right, so long as women know their place in it. Although the *MsTaken Body* is innocent of any social

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theory, Kupfermann concludes by advocating dancing lessons and increased social awareness for the deracinated western woman, but why stop there? Her arguments lead right back to the infinitely more orderly customs so vividly described by Daly.

Nancy Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* is the only book I am discussing which is likely to have an immediate social impact. Appearing after a wave of enthusiasm for 'parenting' in the United States, *Mothering* is in fact the first psychoanalytic study of gender which lends authority to the hope that parental roles can change. I understand that Chodorow has already attracted a professional following in the United States, which she well deserves. *Mothering* begins by demolishing the biological arguments for innate gender differences in relation to nurturing. Aside from the hormonal effects of lactation and a link between male hormones and aggression, the biological evidence, which Chodorow reviews in great detail, is contradictory or points to no difference. Furthermore, animal experiments ignore human evolution and the dynamic nature of social and family structure. Chodorow then sets aside the feminist argument that gender roles come from social conditioning as a true but inadequate explanation insufficiently researched.

Instead, for Chodorow, gender differentiation arises in the differing object-relations formed by boys and girls, beginning with the relation to the mother. Post-Freudian theorists, notably Juliet Mitchell in *Psychoanalysis and Feminism*, see gender differences developing in the oedipal phase (see Susan Alexander and Barbara Taylor's 'In Defence of "Patriarchy"' NS 1 February 1980). *Mothering* locates differing ego development much earlier, even in the first weeks of life. The infant boy immediately senses his 'otherness' from his different-sex mother. Girls, with a same-sex mother,

> come to experience themselves as less separate than boys, as having more permeable ego boundaries. Girls come to define themselves more in relation to others ... these personality features are reflected in superego development.

Later, when the girl enters her oedipal phase of attachment to the father she retains (contrary to Freud's view) a strong attachment and identification with the mother, giving her a more complex repertory of emotional response.

Mothering consistently relates the child to its family, and relates family members to their changing historic roles. Chodorow points out, for example, that as the responsibilities of nurturing and domestic economy have decreased, the time and devotion which the mother is expected to give her children have increased – and mothering at present is defined by exclusion from the rest of life. For Chodorow, John Bowlby and Alice Balint's advocacy of an intensive and exclusive mother-child attachment smacks of its historic period, as a reaction against inadequate child-care during the second world war, and as a way to remove women from the work force after the war. Also, it is simply inaccurate to say, as Alice Balint does, that 'the ideal mother has no interests of her own ... [and] for all of us it remains self-evident that the interests of mother and child are identical'. The mother-child relation is always asymmetrical; the mother inevitably has other interests, while for the infant she is the world. In fact, it is by refusing reciprocity to the infant that the mother socialises it. There is no need to divide the labour of nurturing along sexual lines, and no need to make it the work of one parent, although, as Chodorow remarks, people brought up that way find it hard to imagine another system.

Mothering is an optimistic book, in the meliorative tradition of American psychoanalysis. Nevertheless, even if parents can try not to pass on the old patterns, they usually struggle in vain to change their own ego structures.

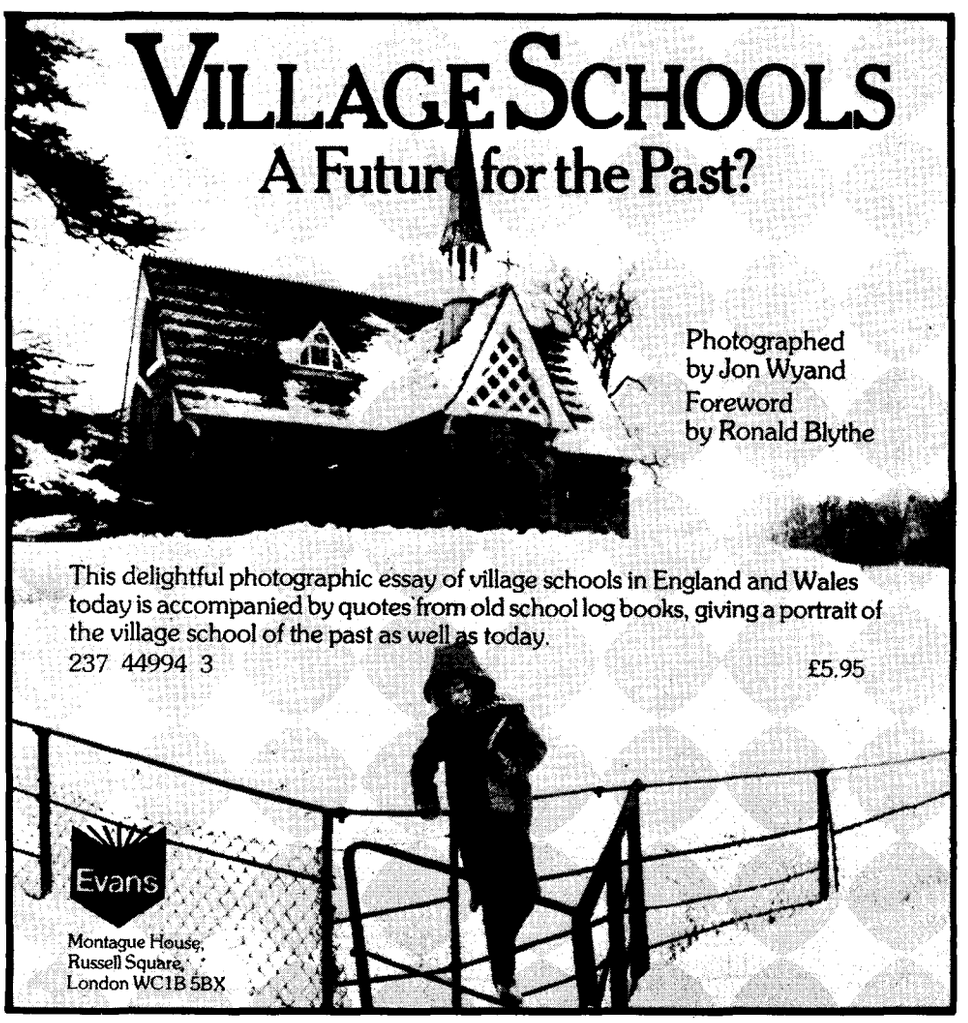
Peter Wilsher

Brain Waves

Broca's Brain by CARL SAGAN *Hodder* £6.95
The Natural History of the Mind by GORDON RATTRAY TAYLOR *Secker* £6.95
The Brain Book by PETER RUSSELL *Routledge* £7.95
The Divine Banquet of the Brain by MACDONALD CRITCHLEY *Raven Press* $19.50
Mind and Nature by GREGORY BATESON *Wildwood House* £7.50

M. Paul Broca, like Hudson (of the Bay) or Magellan (of the Straits), attained a sort of immortality by having his name attached to a discovery. In his case, though, the landmark concerned was not geographical but anatomical – he identified that small area in the human brain (temporal cortex, behind the left ear) within which is located the major part of our ability to speak and articulate ideas. He plays a leading role in two of the books under review, a walk-on part in two others, and his spirit hovers benevolently, if unattributedly, behind the preoccupations of the fifth.

It was, as described by Carl Sagan, a very attractive spirit. Broca, a leading figure in the development of 19th-century medicine, was not only the founder of modern brain surgery, but a brave, and extremely practical pioneer of health care for the poor. When rioters threatened to pillage the funds of the Assistance Publique in Paris he personally smuggled out the assets stuffed into carpet bags and hidden in a cart-load of potatoes. Naturally such a person came under deep official suspicion. When he attempted to set up the first anthropological society in France (whose collections became the core of Paris's present-day Musée de l'Homme) the Minister of Public Instruction and the Prefect of Police, believing that any free pursuit of knowledge about human beings must be essentially subversive, insisted that a police spy in plain clothes should attend all meetings, with authority to close the proceedings should anything be said 'against society, religion or the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Foreword by Ronald Blythe
This delightful photographic essay of village schools in England and Wales today is accompanied by quotes from old school log books, giving a portrait of the village school of the past as well as today.
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government'. Once, as the unfortunate functionary faced the prospect of yet another far-ranging discussion on archaeology, mythology, physiology, anatomy, psychology, linguistics and M. Darwin's new notions on evolution, he requested permission to take a walk. 'No, no, my friend', said a. for once. unsympathetic Broca. 'Sit down, and earn your pay.'

Such a career, with its combination of curiosity, compassion and achievement lends itself admirably to illustrating the nature of scientific enquiry, and Sagan, an astrophysicist who has become one of the best popular interpreters of what the men in white coats are up to, makes excellent use of its possibilities in the opening essay of his new collection. His catalytic discovery, while wandering among the dusty skulls and ceremonial masks hidden away in the cellars of the Musée de l'Homme, was to come across a low, cylindrical bottle, among the lovingly preserved cranial remnants of famous murderers, Second Empire notables amd assorted apes, containing the formalin-soaked residuum of Broca's own brain. From this macabre find, with its overtones of body-snatching, the Faust legend and the bribery and stealth required before Leonardo and Vesalius could embark on their exploration of human anatomy, he distils an eloquent – and in these sceptical, fearful days, much needed – defence of the drive to know and understand. Broca himself was as prone to error and prejudice as the next man. He believed men superior to women. He spent years dissecting French and German brains (and discovering that they were indistinguishable) in order to refute widely-held claims of Teutonic superiority. But against all current social, religious and political opinion (as late as 1876 he was the subject of a major campaign to block the teaching of anthropology anywhere in France) he concluded, and refused to be shifted from the conclusion, that there were deep connections in brain physiology between men and gorillas. And as Sagan says:

> All enquiries carry with them some element of risk. There is no guarantee that the universe will conform to our pre-dispositions. But I do not see that we can deal with the universe – both the outside and the inside universe – without studying it. The best way to avoid abuses is for the populace in general to be scientifically literate, to understand the implications of such investigations. In exchange for freedom of enquiry scientists are obliged to explain their work. If science is considered a closed priesthood, too difficult and arcane for the average person to understand, the dangers of abuse are greater. But if science is a topic of general interest and concern – if both its delights and its social consequences are discussed regularly and competently in the schools, the press and at the dinner table – we have greatly improved our prospects for learning how the world really is and for improving both it and us.

Sagan devotes most of his own book to describing, and by implication defending, the current pre-occupations of astronomy and space-research. But the rest of these authors concentrate their interest, like Broca himself, on the even more mysterious things that go on inside people's heads. It was Herophilus of Chalcedon, around 300 BC, who first located human intelligence in that bony receptacle that sits on top of the spine and between the ears, and despite two millennia of pretty intensive exploration, the nature of most of the happenings there remains obscure.

Rattray Taylor, who, like Sagan, has built up a solid reputation as a populariser and de-mystifier of science, makes the most elaborate effort to set out just how much (or how little) we know about the workings of the mind. He describes the long series of efforts, starting with Broca, to locate particular functions and faculties at a specific point within the brain structure – and the infuriating realisation later that although such locations are important they are not unique: somehow, when the key area is damaged or removed, the brain, given time, can usually find some other way to take over its job. This sequence seems only too typical: every time some new, powerful insight appears – brain as telephone exchange, brain as neuron-activated computer, brain as hierarchically-ordered data-filtering mechanism – so realisation deepens as to the complexity of the still-unexplained. Taylor makes a bravura, if occasionally slightly breathless effort to summarise the problems and concludes:

> Between the quality of experience and brain function there seems to be no intelligible relationship. Why does stimulating one group of cells cause pleasure, stimulating another very similar group cause fear, yet another thirst, yet another memory recall, yet another euphoria?

No one, it appears, has any conclusive answers. But, as his lengthy index testifies, it is not for want of trying.

Russell and Critchley are more modest in their objectives. *The Brain Book* takes a quick gallop through the present state of knowledge and then settles down to help make better use of the equipment we have got: mnemonics, memory-sharpening techniques, faster and more fruitful reading, and a more effective technique for taking notes. The tone is rather aggressively self-improving but some of the ideas are useful. Dr Critchley, a leading neurologist, has collected here some of his less technical and more generally accessible papers and lectures. One of his specialities is aphasia – the various disorders of language which prevent people from communicating and expressing themselves – and he gives a fine Balzacian (or perhaps Flaubertian) account of the row between Broca and two French provincial doctors, father and son, as to who had first identified 'Broca's Area'. But although some of the other material is inherently fascinating, the flavour of Dr Critchley's prose – of old copies of the Lancet – is probably a minority taste.

So, too, I suspect is Gregory Bateson, though the questions he raises, and his attempted answers, are very much central to most people's present concerns. The full title of his book is *Mind and Nature: a Necessary Unity* and his purpose is to argue that most of the world's contemporary ills can be traced to the extent that mind and nature have got out of phase. The clearest statement of this comes in his appendix, which reprints the memorandum he sent in August 1978 to his fellow Regents at the University of California. Like most academic institutions in the West, he felt they were trying to 'maintain standards of "excellence" in the face of growing distrust, vulgarity, insanity, exploitation of resources, victimisation of persons and quick commercialism' and were demonstrating, in the process, an almost total obsolescence of moral, religious and intellectual ideas.

Recovery, he argues, depends on the restoration of balance between intellectual rigour, which he sees as an essentially conservative and dangerously sterile approach, and social imagination, whose regenerative capacities have been allowed to atrophy, largely through fear of the unpredictable and uncontrolled. This dichotomy, in his view, mirrors and parallels the process of evolution itself, and to the extent that mankind, with its new-found scientific knowledge and coercive power sets out to direct and distort it, so do we drift further in the direction of chaos. It is a powerful and persuasive thesis, stripped down to its essentials, but unfortunately Mr Bateson's somewhat verbose and elliptical style is hardly calculated to get it widely read. As Broca said, in defending his own belief in evolution: 'I would rather be a transformed ape than a degenerate son of Adam.' But it does help when the ape's linguistic abilities are adapted to persuasion, not repulsion.

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Alan Hollinghurst

Life after Death

Back here in time to see
the chestnuts in their orange moment,
the font stooked for the festival
that is one of the family days,
russets and grasses on the crusaders'
tense effigies.

It is a dream, weird, inevitable.
The light shrinks and evening
cobwebs the cradled village,
its fruitnets and hives,
the widows' patient gardening,
the glimmering fingerpost,
the churchyard where he is for ever.
I wake too soon to see how daybreak
bleakly resurrects it for the billionth time.

The train withdraws me through a dawn
of unreadable portents,
shows me through the running window
unpeopled hours of farm and waste,
the absurd off-guard of ordinary actions,
the station-porters in the cold of their duty
the waiters sleeping in the dining-car.

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Andrew Motion

On the Frontier

The Strange Museum by TOM PAULIN *Faber* £3.50
Survivors by WILLIAM PESKETT *Secker* £3.90

Like most good poets, Tom Paulin is obsessed. In his first collection, *A State of Justice,* he pursued the issues raised by his title with relentless fascination, and in his second, *The Strange Museum,* he is even more determined. Not that his interests are quite the same as they were. He is still concerned with justice and necessary organisation, but his two overriding preoccupations – in abstract as well as specific terms – have become love and history. On page after page he uses the ideas of 'grace' and 'great gentleness' associated with the former, and the fierce impersonality suggested by the latter, to frame an argument that he knows cannot be easily solved. His purpose isn't to isolate one from the other, since love might then decline into vacuous civility, and history connote what he calls 'The forced jubilance of a crowd/That is desolate and obedient'. Instead, he tries to keep them in watchful alliance, and to position himself as a sentry on their frontier – minimising the potential defects of both sides, and arranging for their several virtues to combine.

Introducing this kind of border imagery isn't simply an accident of style. Paulin's poems encourage its use by employing it themselves to fulfil a number of related functions. One, predictably, is to describe Irish politics; another is to summarise international social distinctions (in the *London Magazine* he recently said that living in Nottingham was like being 'on the border between the civil lawns of the south and the brick mills of the authentic north'); and a third is to summon up enriching echoes of the poet to whom he owes most: Auden. Just as Auden's early poems inhabit a world of spies and boundaries, so Paulin's convey a series of vulnerable divided states where 'private faces' seek and cannot find a role in 'public places':

> I see a crowded troopship
> Moving down the blue lough
> On a summer's morning,
> Its anal colours
> Almost fresh in the sun.
> Those black boots are shining.
> There is only a pink blur
> Of identical features.

Auden's influence on Paulin hasn't simply been a matter of directing his attention to ways in which the machinery of state threatens individuality. It has also helped to shape the nature and scope of his imaginative response. The effect is less evident in language and rhythm than in narrative strategies (Paulin normally confines himself – sometimes rather too rigorously – to what he has dubbed 'terse fricative cadences'). Nearly all his most interesting poems adapt techniques associated with short stories, and the control of their glancingly-reported incidents owes a good deal to Auden's practice in poems like 'Gare du Midi'. The result is not that an awareness of their poetic ancestry detracts from their original merits, but that they realise in literary terms what they seek in political ones: a sensitive and compassionate sense of history.

The complexity of this achievement is intensified, and its significance increased, by virtue of the fact that Paulin's poems combine their discussion of historical processes with an examination of their own narrative authenticity. The distortions of actual time are paralleled and interpreted by those of story-telling, as 'Anastasia McLaughlin' illustrates:

> The logs in the grate have turned to a soft ash.
> The dour gardener who cut them is smoking
> In the warm greenhouse, wondering did his nephew
> Break in the week before and thieve
> McLaughlin's silver?

Incidents beget suppositions to similar effect in 'Atlantic Changelings' and 'Trotsky in Finland', and the book's longest poem, 'The Other Voice', also mingles an account of history with a meditation on art, to illuminate the pressures and deceptions of both. Its central character, Mandelstam, has the last word:

> In the great dome of art
> (It was this we longed for
> In our Petropolis)
> I am free of history.
>
> Beyond dust and rhetoric,
> In the meadows of the spirit
> I kiss the Word.

The ideas contained in this poem – implicitly as well as explicitly – are evident throughout *The Strange Museum.* Again and again it tackles the vulnerability of idealism, the resilience of hope, and the danger to human nature of purely functional pragmatism. It's not often that contemporary British poets treat these things at all – let alone with such serious good sense. The scale of its ambitions, and the intelligence with which they are fulfilled, make it a continuously exciting book.

William Peskett, by comparison, plays very safe. Like Paulin, he was born and brought up in Northern Ireland, but when his first collection appeared it showed signs that he was reluctant to deal with many of the larger themes his country thrust upon him. His second, *Survivors,* now reveals that he has moved 'From Belfast to Suffolk' to consider their demands at greater leisure – with fairly unsurprising consequences. On one hand the relative security of a 'demilitarised home' where 'the night-police don't scare me' has enabled him to develop a more confident sense of belonging, and a more assured technique. On the other, it has allowed him to lose a considerable amount of imaginative intensity.

The trouble is, as Peskett comforts himself by developing a cult of rural quietism, he risks treating the countryside too blandly. Animals and birds do kill and get killed, but usually with a reductive lyric artfulness:

> The birds fall like ashes
> in the grove. A last sharp turn
> in their fluttering flight
> and silent energy dissipates
> from the meatless things.

Much the same is true of his response to the great indoors too. His longing for 'a quiet life' and 'the truth in simple living' leads him to eschew strong feelings, and 'switch the passion on' briefly, if at all. Under these constraints, no matter how sympathetic the reasons for their existence, poetic rewards are bound to be severely limited.

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Paperbacks

Below is a selection of recently published paperbacks, both originals and reprints. Space unfortunately permits the notice of only a small proportion of all the interesting paperbacks which are newly available.

Fiction

KINGSLEY AMIS **Jake's Thing** *Penguin* £1.25. A middle-aged man's relationship to his own sexuality.

MARGARET ATWOOD **The Edible Woman** *Virago* £2.50. The first novel by the celebrated Canadian writer.

ANTHONY BURGESS **1985** *Arrow* 95p. A comic and frightening fictional prediction.

WILLA CATHER **A Lost Lady** £2.25 and **My Antonia** £2.75. *Virago*. Two subtle and lyrical works by a great mid-Western novelist.

AVERY CORMAN **Kramer v. Kramer** *Fontana* 95p. Film tie-in. Account of a relationship between father and son.

GÜNTER GRASS **The Flounder** *Penguin* £1.95. A fictional examination of social, political and gastronomic history.

DAVID HANLEY **In Guilt and in Glory** *Arrow* £1.25. A novel of contemporary Ireland; change versus tradition.

RICHARD HUGHES **The Wooden Shepherdess** *Panther* £1.50. Second volume of Hughes's masterly novel of England and Germany between the wars.

RICHARD JEFFERIES **After London** *Oxford* £1.50. London has suffocated in its own filth and a young man escapes across the lake which has formed over the South of England.

IAN MCEWAN **The Cement Garden** *Pan/Picador* £1.25. A novel of childhood by one of the most remarkable of younger British writers.

THOMAS MOFOLO **Chaka** *Heinemann Educational* £1.50. A retelling of a Zulu epic.

ELSA MORANTE **History** *Penguin* £2.50. The most ambitious book to date by a leading contemporary Italian writer.

ARTHUR MORRISON **Tales of Mean Streets** and **Child of the Jago** *Quartet* £2.25 each. Novels of the East End at the turn of the century.

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BARBARA PYM **The Sweet Dove Died** *Panther* £1.25. A wry and penetrating study of selfishness in human relations.

JACK RONDER **The Lost Tribe** *Star* £1.50. A Jewish boy escapes from the pogroms of Lithuania to live in Dundee.

JOSEF SKVORECKY **The Bass Saxophone** *Pan/Picador* £1.25. Celebration of the power of the individual against the state.

VLADIMIR VOINOVICH **The Ivankiad** *Penguin* 95p. A Russian writer's struggle against bureaucracy.

Thrillers & Detective Novels

NICHOLAS BLAKE **The Worm of Death** *Hamlyn* £1. Re-issue of one of the most intriguing of C. Day Lewis's detective stories.

LEN DEIGHTON **SS-GB** *Panther* £1.25. Spy thriller set in conquered Britain.

PETER LOVESEY **Waxwork, Case of Spirits, Invitation to a Dynamite Party** and **The Detective Wore Silk Drawers** *Penguin* 80p each. Cases confronting Detective-Sergeant Cribbs.

ALASTAIR MACLEAN **Goodbye California** *Fontana* £1. His latest title in paperback, about a fanatic threatening to trigger an earthquake.

ELLERY QUEEN **The Siamese Twin Mystery** *Hamlyn* £1. Reprint of classic detective story.

Autobiography & Biography

RICHARD BUCKLE **Nijinsky** *Penguin* £2.50. The definitive life of the great Russian dancer.

ROBERT GITTINGS **The Older Hardy** *Penguin* £1.50. Hardy's life from his first publications to his death.

ALEXANDER HERZEN **Childhood, Youth and Exile** *Oxford* £1.75. One of the great Russian autobiographies, illuminating in both its personal and its political aspects.

NORMAN LEVINE **Canada Made Me** *Dereau & Greenberg* £2.95. The Canadian writer's reflections on his early experiences which led to self-imposed exile.

SEAN O'CASEY **Autobiographies, Vols I & II** *Pan* £2.50 per vol. The writer's life from his early years of Dublin poverty to ambiguous fame.

JOHN PEARSON **Façades** *Fontana* £1.50. The lives of the Sitwells.

ISAAC BASHEVIS SINGER **In My Father's Court** *Penguin* £1.50. The Nobel Prize winner's memoirs of his early years in a Jewish community in Poland.

ANTHONY TROLLOPE **Autobiography** *Oxford* £1.50. A memoir which shocked readers when it was published because of its frankness about money.

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ROBERT CONQUEST **Kolyma: The Arctic Death Camps** *Oxford* £1.95. Portrait of the most infamous of Stalin's labour camps.

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DAVID IRVING **The Destruction of Dresden** *Futura* £1.25. Account of the raid in which 135,000 people died and of the decision-making leading up to it.

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FRANCIS HUXLEY **The Way of the Sacred** *Star* £2.50. A study of taboos, rites and symbols.

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DAVID LEWIS **The Secret Language of Your Child** *Pan* £1.50. A description of the way children learn to communicate before they have learnt to speak.

WOLFGANG PEHNT **Expressionist Architecture** *Thames & Hudson* £4.95. Illustrated history of the evolution of a style which began in Germany in 1910.

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SPRING PAPERBACKS

David Caute

The Hidden God

Oxford's computerised Jesus

To honour (one assumes) the tenth anniversary of Fontana's Modern Masters series, edited by Frank Kermode, Oxford now launch a carbon-copy under the brazenly imitative general title of *Past Masters*. Whereas Fontana kicked off in 1970 with Marcuse, Guevara, Fanon, Camus and Lévi-Strauss, Keith Thomas's founding family goes one better with Aquinas, Dante, Pascal, Hume, Marx and – stroke of sheer genius – Jesus. That Marx figures in both series brings him first honours as both a Modern and a Past Master, though I presume that a publishing house which makes hay selling the Bible (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John long ago relinquished their copyright) must subscribe to the view that Jesus, too, lives.

To review and make sense of all six masters may seem a formidable task. Jesus was born in the year nought, Aquinas in 1225, Dante in 1265, Pascal in 1623, Hume in 1711 and Marx in 1818. Yet the wisdom behind the overall design emerges if one treats it as a six-part investigation of religious belief, starting with the Saviour and culminating in Marx's repudiation of the supernatural as an alienated reflection of unresolved tensions with the material world.

I turned first to Humphrey Carpenter's *Jesus*, hoping to be told, without equivocation, whether Jesus was and is the Son of God. If only from a purely selfish point of view, there is good reason to keep abreast of this question. Unfortunately, Mr Carpenter's admirably concise and lucid exploration of Jesus's life and teachings is vitiated by extreme caution; carefully weighed, the evidence on almost every vital issue is found to be inconclusive. Did Jesus regard himself as the Son of God? It's not clear. What does the Son of Man mean? It's not clear. Were the healing miracles fictions of oral tradition? 'There is probably an element of truth in this,' writes Mr Carpenter, 'perhaps a large element.' But he will not allow us to dismiss the miracles out of hand because, he argues, this would leave us with a Jesus whose impact on his contemporaries becomes inexplicable. Therefore, however elaborated and distorted the miracle stories as related in the Gospels, 'something happened which gave rise to those stories'. Mr Carpenter does not strengthen his point by admitting that what might be interpreted within the Jewish tradition as miracles could today be regarded as 'psychosomatic cures and the remarkable impact of a charismatic personality. We might have seen not supernatural events but the reactions of supernaturally-minded people'.

Although published in time for Easter, Mr Carpenter also hedges his bets regarding the Resurrection – apparently that event, subject to divergent versions in the Gospels, 'must remain a matter for belief or disbelief.' This won't do: did this fellow rise up out of his tomb or didn't he?

Mr Carpenter has nevertheless written a short book of great charm and interest. While insisting that the core of Jesus's apparently contradictory or elusive teaching is 'Keep the Law – but keeping the Law is not enough', he reminds us that the essence of Christianity lies not in Christ's teaching but in the belief that his death and resurrection marked a special self-revelation of God, an atonement for the sins of mankind. Henceforward salvation, eternal life, would be available to those who believed: Jesus saves. Christianity is a religion *about* the man Jesus; as Paul put it: '. . . if Christ was not raised, then our Gospel is null and void.'

For the relatively ignorant layman – and I suppose that Past Masters, like Modern Masters, must largely depend on his appetite for self-improvement – Mr Carpenter provides plenty of absorbing information. I did not know that 'eye for eye, tooth for tooth' (in preference to which Jesus proposed the turning of the other cheek) was not so much a barbaric ethic of vengeance as a code of restraint. Rugby players please note. Nor was I aware that the Greek word 'virgin' is probably a mis-translation of the Hebrew word for 'young woman'; if so, Joseph may hold his head up at last.

Skipping the next 1,200 years (dark ages, etc.), we meet one of the great philosopher-theologians of early-medieval Christian Europe, St Thomas Aquinas. The odd thing about Anthony Kenny's study is that it treats Aquinas's theology as if it were merely an incidental shell from which a valuable kernel of philosophical erudition can be extracted. I'm not sure how well the relatively ignorant layman will fare with Mr Kenny. There's quite a lot about subject-copula-predicate sentences, peppered with typical Oxford teasers like 'Socrates is white' and 'Churchill smokes':

He seems to be stating a general principle that

Jesus by HUMPHREY CARPENTER; **Aquinas** by ANTHONY KENNY; **Dante** by GEORGE HOLMES; **Pascal** by ALBAN KRAILSHEIMER; **Hume** by A. J. AYER; **Marx** by PETER SINGER *Oxford* 95p each

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> wherever you can construct a proposition of the form 'S is P' you can assert 'P-ness is' or 'There is P-ness'. Does he mean that a proposition of the form 'P-ness is' is equivalent to 'Propositions can be formed with "P" as predicate' or that it is equivalent to the proposition that 'Something is P'?

I don't know; Jesus might know, though Mr Carpenter says he wasn't an intellectual so perhaps he didn't. Aquinas had five ways of proving God's existence but I gather Mr Kenny doesn't think they can sustain modern scrutiny.

George Holmes's *Dante* is primarily a work of exegesis, a highly informative introduction to the Florentine poet's *Divine Comedy*. Although the Christian tradition did not weigh on Dante with the same self-denying intensity as on Aquinas, both writers were confronted by the subversive influence of Aristotle, a philosopher apparently unmoved by the immortality of the soul or the divine creation of the world. Both wrestled with the dilemma of free will within the context of divine providence.

Blaise Pascal, although a scientist, was a stubborn fundamentalist: a first man, Adam, had been created in a state of grace from which he fell through sin. The Fall, however, finally emerges as *felix culpa,* a happy guilt, since it offers God the opportunity to stage the Incarnation and the Redemption. This of course is the greatest nonsense, though Alban Krailsheimer does not say so or willingly concede any point against a writer for whom he shows unreserved admiration and whom he is at pains to elevate above such contemporaries as Montaigne and Descartes. (Apparently Pascal had two meetings with Descartes while ill in bed, but 'impressions were not favourable on either side'.) Writing with a style and warmth unusual within the cramped confines of 80 pages, Mr Krailsheimer remarks of Pascal that 'neither his enemies nor his friends have been able to hide his light'. Yet Pascal, for all the literary genius displayed in the *Provincial Letters* and the *Pensées,* took a perverse delight in the sin and suffering permitted by the 'hidden God' who wilfully concealed himself from men's understanding, condemning the vast majority to darkness. He also believed that his niece had been cured of a longstanding fistula in her eye after contact with a relic of the Holy Thorn kept at Port-Royale. 'Intellectual truth,' argues Mr Krailsheimer, 'is all very well, but it does not feed the spirit or the emotions.'

After this it is with relief that one advances through time to the Scottish philosopher David Hume, explained and interpreted with characteristic clarity by A. J. Ayer. Hume's view of God, sin and guilt makes a refreshing contrast to Pascal's:

> human actions . . . either can have no moral turpitude at all, as proceeding for so good a cause; or if they have any turpitude, they must involve our Creator in the same guilt . . .

Sir Alfred comments: if an omnipotent creator does exist, then he is not benevolent. In Ayer's view, Hume rejected not only Christianity but also Deism, even though in *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion,* Philo, the protagonist whose outlook is closest to Hume's, is made to say that it is only the nature, not the existence, of the Deity which is in question. After so much piety, a dose of ridicule is refreshing: why should we not conclude that the world is 'the first rude essay of some infant deity who afterwards abandoned it', or 'the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated deity'? In short, if men postulate God on the *a priori* hypothesis of a grand design, an Original Will, they are still left with the task of inventing every point of theology 'by the utmost license of fancy and hypothesis'.

Marx was no Christian. Following Feuerbach, etc., he soon dismissed religion as a form of alienation, what Peter Singer nicely terms a 'misdescribed anthropology'. However, Mr Singer misleads somewhat when he suggests that Marx went on to regard money, rather than religion, 'as the chief form of human alienation'. What Marx did, surely, was to subsume religious belief into his general concept of the false consciousness generated by class struggle. He did this somewhat crudely, blurring the distinction between creed and cult, God and Church. In *Capital, I* he wrote:

> The religious world is but the reflex of the real world. And for a society based upon the production of commodities . . . Christianity with its *cultus* of abstract man, more especially in its bourgeois developments, Protestantism, Deism, etc., is the most fitting form of religion.

What one would most like to know – and after reading about these six Past Masters I still feel uneasy – is which of them is smiling now.

2,000,001

DAVID ATTWOOLL, Managing Editor, General Books, at the Oxford University Press, describes the re-birth of a famous series in paperback.

'He had a very genuine feeling for literature which the reader of his own novels would scarcely suspect' was one barbed phrase in his *Times* obituary in 1948. He was handsome with a distinguished monocled profile, but lost dignity when he stood up because his legs were too short for his torso. He established his own publishing business in 1897 at the age of 24, was the first English publisher to buy a large space in a daily newspaper to advertise a single book, and published George Bernard Shaw, G. K. Chesterton, Samuel Butler, John Masefield, Ronald Firbank, Alec Waugh, the Sitwells, the Powys brothers, and many more. He accepted *Dubliners* after it had been rejected by 22 publishers and printers, and his list included *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists, The Shropshire Lad* (Housman demanded no royalty as long as the price remained at sixpence), *The Hooligan Nights*, and *Little Black Sambo*. He was bankrupted twice.

Grant Richards self-consciously prefaced his publishing autobiography, *Author Hunting*, with a quotation from GBS: 'You should call your book The Tragedy of a Publisher who Allowed Himself to Fall in Love with Literature'. In it, Richards not only omits to mention that he published Joyce, but also that he was the publisher who started The World's Classics.

The glut of new paperback editions of Thomas Hardy's novels last year, 50 years after Hardy's death, came as no surprise to copyright watchers. Much the same will no doubt happen next year with D. H. Lawrence (despite the forthcoming, sometimes radically different, new Cambridge editions) and with Conan Doyle. Under the 1842 Copyright Act, copyright expired seven years after an author's death or 42 years after publication, so the work of most of the great Victorians entered the public domain around 1900. The huge potential readership and available printing technology apart, this was the major reason for the establishment of Nelson's New Century Library in 1900, The World's Classics in 1901, Collins's Pocket Classics in 1903, and Dent's Everyman's Library in 1906. Grant Richards's first World's Classic was *Jane Eyre* (followed by *The Essays of Elia*, Tennyson's poems, *The Vicar of Wakefield,* Hazlitt's *Table Talk,* Emerson's Essays, Keats's poems, *Oliver Twist, The Ingoldsby Legends, Wuthering Heights, The Origin of Species,* and *Pilgrim's Progress*). He had published 66 titles in the famous dumpy format at a shilling each by 1905, when his first bankruptcy was imminent and the series was bought by Henry Frowde for the Oxford University Press.

In his *Informal History* of OUP, Peter Sutcliffe describes the early processes of selection of titles for The World's Classics as whimsical by comparison to the reverential approach to Great Literature of Everyman's Library: 'Everyman sought a solemn bond between publisher and reader, World's Classics were a kind of flirtation. Nobody could foresee what would come next, or detect any signs of a balanced editorial policy.' Despite this, only two years after the acquisition of the series by OUP, the *Periodical* asked 'who reads and buys The World's *Classics*? We do not profess to know, but the fact remains that nearly two million copies have been sold.' The series grew to 620 volumes, and became one of the best-selling series of literary classics throughout the world.

'I remember the 1940s,' the old Soho bookseller says in *The Human Factor,* 'how people would queue for a new World's Classic.' (The film gets the format of the book quite wrong in that scene.) Trollope and Tolstoy in the Maude translations – 'You can't beat Aylmer Maude for Tolstoy', as the bookseller says – were particular strengths of the series, which included many copyright works and new commissioned translations. There were many 'discoveries', and less obvious titles, too, such as Flora Thompson's *Lark Rise to Candleford*, Alain Fournier's *The Lost Domain*, Maurice O'Sullivan's *Twenty Years A-Growing*. In recent years, however, sales of The World's Classics have declined; few titles were added after the second world war and none since 1970. Printing technology and public taste became increasingly committed to paperbacks: the dumpy hardback form ceased to be a cheap 'mass-market' one, and became a collector's curiosity.

This spring, the World's Classics are to be reborn as a new paperback series: 40 titles will be published in the first year and at least 30 a year thereafter. The first batch ranges from Aristotle to Beerbohm and includes J

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Austen and – of course – *Jane Eyre*. It is no great feat of market research to establish which are the most popular and widely read books among both general readers and students. A mundane but important factor in determining the selection of early titles was also the availability of good texts: many are drawn from recent scholarly editions or are specially commissioned new editions and translations; only a few are taken direct from the old World's Classics (reset, with new introductions).

Another guiding principle, however, was to reproduce the traditional strengths of the old series, so that, for example, the first year will see all six of Trollope's Barsetshire novels published. In addition to publishing the absolutely central classics, it is a key aim of the series to fill many of the yawning gaps in literature – whether these gaps were caused by a restrictive critical orthodoxy, an unadventurous reading public which often buys books in large numbers only when legitimised by television, or overcautious publishing, they are far more numerous now than in, say, 1910 or 1930, when a much more comprehensive range of literature was readily and cheaply available from several publishers. Hence the early inclusion in the new World's Classics of, say, a clutch (if that's the word) of gothic novels, Icelandic sagas, or Mary Wollstonecraft. Then there are carefully placed dark horses, with less form, too, and it must be admitted that many of these do represent editors' personal enthusiasms: for example, the first batch includes Alexander Herzen's autobiographical *Childhood, Youth and Exile*, a central classic of Russian literature long overdue for popular recognition in the English-speaking world, and Richard Jefferies's extraordinary novel *After London* in which the city has finally sunk under its own pollution and an adolescent quest ensues across the lake which has spread over South-East England.

Grant Richards, too, would no doubt have 'promoted', say, *The Odyssey* (in a new translation due in September) with 'dumpbins', posters, and 'crowners' in the bookshops, if they had been available. He might have been deterred by the high level of textual accuracy that discerning general readers and students now expect; he would have been appalled at the cost of paper. And he might have been surprised at how constant the majority of the books considered 'classics' was, 79 years on. The hope is that there will not be too many titles regarded in 2059 with as little recognition as we now give such erstwhile World's Classics as *Mrs Caudle's Curtain Lectures* or the novels of Theodore Watts-Dunton.

Among this week's contributors:

BRIAN MARTIN is Lecturer in Modern English Literature at Pembroke College, Oxford.

ANDREW MOTION's collection of poems, *The Pleasure Steamers*, was published by Carcanet in 1978.

PETER WILSHER is on the staff of the *Sunday Times*.

HELEN MCNEIL teaches in the School of English and American Studies at the University of East Anglia.

PETER CONRAD's *Imagining America* will be published by Routledge later this year.

JULIAN BARNES's first novel *Metroland* was published last week.

John Alwyne

Magic

Fifth Business, The Manticore and **World of Wonders** by ROBERTSON DAVIES *Star* £1.25, £1.25 and £1.50

The *Fifth Business* trilogy was published in Canada between 1970 and 1975. Two different publishers, Macmillan and W. H. Allen, were responsible for the British hardbacks: this change of house proved fatal for reviews and for any possible success in sales. With the appearance of the three books in Star paperback, there is a chance to get Robertson Davies's work better known. The trilogy is about three men, born in the same Canadian village in the same generation but going in very different directions after their Deptford upbringing. The narrator of *Fifth Business* is Dunstan Ramsay, a schoolmaster whose mentality, traditional and academically inquisitive, sets the standard of morality and observation. In a plot that is endlessly shifting he remains reliable and consistent: because his subject is history, he can see much of the story *sub specie aeternitatis*. Far from slowing down the action, this gives the narrative a depth and maturity that would otherwise be missing. He can measure his contemporaries by the standard of the saints who constitute his scholarly hobby, and it is his hagiographic research which takes him to Europe to meet the Bollandists and their most eloquent mouthpiece Padre Ignacio Blazon. Together the two friends philosophise, revealing the interplay in *Fifth Business* between myth and history, imagination and reality.

The narrator changes in *The Manticore*, the trilogy's second book. The background story is the same but is told by the son of Boy Staunton, with the sympathetic encouragement of a Jungian psychoanalyst. Again the narrative achieves another dimension: the characters of *Fifth Business* are seen from the level of a younger generation, whose prejudices could not fail to be different. *World of Wonders*, the third volume, introduces a further level again. We know Paul Dempster already as the third protagonist, with Ramsay and Staunton, from the original village of Deptford; Dempster now elaborates on his extraordinary and wonderful world, that world of magic and make-believe: not so far from the territory of myth, but conditioned by his amazing, Houdini-like sleight of hand. That make-believe is extended by the fact that Dempster, alias Magnus Eisengrim, is asked to play Houdini in a film about his life. How far then does reality affect the world of make-believe? And to what extent does Boy Staunton, the supreme materialist, fall victim to circumstances he cannot materially control?

Fifth Business provides the brickwork, the two later volumes, the lath and plaster. But what a magnificent building is the result: windows on the most versatile channels of scholarship; doors of every sort of perception; a foundation aesthetically subtle and marvellously assimilable; and a rich finish of wit, irony and maturity that bears comparison with any fiction of the last decade.

More paperbacks from Oxford

Just out in Oxford Paperbacks: **Evelyn Waugh's** Edmund Campion, **Graham Greene's** The Pleasure Dome, **Robert Conquest's** Kolyma

Oxford Paperbacks

Coming on 17 April: **Cobbett's** English Gardener, **Lytton Strachey's** selected essays, Volume I of **Leonard Woolf's** Autobiography, **Richard Jefferies'** The Hills and the Vale, and the **National Childbirth Trust's** Pregnancy and Parenthood – and more, at prices from £1.95

Coming later: John Guillebaud's **The Pill,** D. J. Enright's **Oxford Book of Contempory Verse,** Eva Crane's **Book of Honey,** Arthur Ransome's **Rod and Line, The Oxford Literary Guide to the British Isles** – and many more.

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PELICANS

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and **Monte Davis**

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The first of its kind, this book brings a radical new perspective to an often neglected but vital dimension of state control — the relationship between military organizations and racial or ethnic identities. £2.50

Peter Conrad

Mid-Atlantic

The State of the Language edited by Leonard Michaels & Christopher Ricks *California* £7.95

I read *The State of the Language* while flying between the two principal kingdoms of the English language's empire, and the highest compliment I can pay it is that I was so busy being diverted and instructed by the book that I forgot my usual scepticism about the gravity-defying science of aviation. The venue, on reflection, was appropriate, for the book is an Anglo-American compilation, and the English it studies is the language spoken in mid-Atlantic. Despite some curmudgeonly error-bashing by Kingsley Amis, *The State of the Language* has no desire to cordon off English from social change and foreign invasion. In his preface Christopher Ricks insists that words are currency, their meanings a matter of consensus, and the essay by Randolph Quirk, which is awarded first place in the volume, enthusiastically abandons propriety by saluting the scabrous jargon of the day and declaring that 'the sociolinguistic health of English' is better served by our current licentious vernacular than by the repressive rule of Victorian euphemism.

Licensed by Ricks's conciliating preface, the contributors welcome the enriching newspeaks of the day. Language is seen pliably accommodating new feelings, or equipping embattled minorities with the vocabularies they need to articulate their quarrel with society. Room is even found for two pages of boogily hip linguistic defiance of 'the King's Talk' by the black writer Ishmael Reed. The conservative guardian of correctness, Kingsley Amis, takes such malicious glee in amassing and cataloguing currently fashionable solecisms that he too seems half reconciled to them: where, after all, would the satirist be without the folly which keeps him in business?

The users of language are seen in this volume not as its humble servants, who must exert themselves to be worthy of it, but as its casual and confident owners, who can adjust it at will. David Lodge, for instance, defends the laid-back slang of Marin County. Language defers anxiously to an altering world: Robert Burchfield shows how dictionaries have set about revising definitions to mollify aggrieved ethnic sensibilities. These changes can occur with impunity because the essayists are convinced of the resilience of language. Accidents result in happy inventions, not deformations. Thus Anthony Burgess's piece on dubbing mentions a case of this noxious practice which is, he believes, inspired: in Italy 'the alley cat of Walt Disney's *The Aristocats* is turned into one of the nick-eared denizens of the cat colony of the Roman Colosseum and speaks very rich Roman dialect'. Speech defects too aren't afflictions but endearing mutations of the staid norm. As Burgess points out, Humphrey Bogart derived his vocal style – acerbic cynicism mitigated by a marshmallowily sentimental softness – from a 'slight labial paralysis which imparted a lisping quality to his lip consonants'.

Rather than pining for standards of uniformity, *The State of the Language* exults in the comedy of linguistic heterogeneity. Janet Whitcut rigs up a dizzy list of variants Alice might have used when appealing to the mouse she encountered in Wonderland, and Basil Cottle chortles over the bizarrerie of suburban house-names. There are occasional pessimistic reflections on the incapacity of language to confront horrors like Jonestown, a smartly derisive series of essays on the self-serving linguistic obfuscation of the professions (Diane Johnson is particularly good on the odious idiom of reassurance perfected by physicians), and a brilliant account by Frederic Raphael of how words, treasured and isolated by radio, are consumed by television and stewed in a 'visual soup' of importunate imagery. But mostly language is trusted to look after itself, even when being turned inside out as it is by the louche blacks who've converted 'bad', 'shit', 'motherfucker' and even 'nigger' into terms of matey approbation.

Flexibility, emphasised by Ricks in his study of laundered clichés, is the moral of Edmund White's investigation of the niceties of homosexual linguistic delectation. Here an obsolete vocabulary is shown being cleansed and reassembled. Political militancy outlaws winsome limp-wristed adjectives like 'cute' or 'pretty': tricks are nowadays relished if they're 'tough' or 'virile' or 'hot'. As White puts it 'the ephebe with the hyacinthine curls has given way to the bald marine drill sergeant and Donatello's *David* demurs to Bernini's Language obsequiously follows. White interesting on the conscription of that exhausted adjective 'gay' as a generic noun, an Angela Carter examines the same aggrandisement in the jargon of feminism, which places a desperate trust in adverbial accolades: a feminist rag for instance called Patti Smith 'really totally incredibly moving' and the adverbial excess forlornly gesture towards 'an authentic wholeness of experience' which its very flatulence admits can possibly be true.

Among the contributors are a number of *treasonous clerks, dons linguistically slumming* – Randolph Quirk deciphers loo graffiti Christopher Ricks subjects Bob Dylan laconic lyrics to dazingly ingenious interpretation, David Lodge conducts an examiner's meeting in psychobabble. But I don't mean to complain, for the most starting original and stylish language-users in this volume are not the poets (a drab lot) but the literary critics. Hugh Kenner's essay on machinespeak is itself a specimen of concrete computerised poetry, while Ricks stops to show with an acrobatic explication of cliché A zanier and more frenetically brilliant Emerson, Ricks has become a nimble practitioner of those effects of linguistic involution compaction of which he is also the best critic hence on the one hand his enthusiasm for Marvell's ingrown and self-reflecting image and on the other hand his personal addiction to puns, which are instances of the same verbal inspissation. In an astonishing passage (to be found on p.55) he applies this solipsistic technique of his to a single sentence Orwell's which consists, aptly for Ricks, clichés battening on and battering other clichés. Other writers in the volume lean language to its own devices and rely on it to save itself: Ricks more manically galvanises with his own mental energy and riddling ingenuity, so the words start from the page

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like static electricity. This may not exactly vouch for the language's health – it's more like a feverish symptom of morbidity – but that doesn't matter. The book's achievement is to have entertainingly exemplified the uses of our language rather than academically examining them.

Brian Martin

Alive and Fishing

Kingdom Come by MELVYN BRAGG *Secker* £6.50
The Echo Chamber by GABRIEL JOSIPOVICI *Harvester* £6.50
The Blue Guitar by NICHOLAS HASLUCK *Macmillan* £5.95

There is an early censure in *Kingdom Come* on the forward critic,

> . . . much given to scorn, garlanded with recondite epithets and contempt, which he implicitly justified by comparison with the All Time (Dead) Greats, beside whom all contemporaries were midgets, etcetera . . .

Is Melvyn Bragg busily spiking guns? Whether or not, there is no scorn, nor contempt, for this novel. Even with Iris Murdoch or the (dead) Ivy Compton-Burnett cautiously in mind, he emerges with stature at the end of this convincing contemporary novel on 'the way we live now'.

There is much of Bragg, writer, broadcaster, Academy Award winner, financier (according to *Private Eye*), in Douglas Tallentire who manages to cover a great deal of territory in *Kingdom Come*, encompassing sleepy, provincial Cumbria, jet-setty London, and gaudy New York. The final part of a trilogy about the Tallentire family, it is nevertheless self-contained, and although Old John, the Frostian 'hired man' of the first novel, is dead by the end, young John of the fourth generation is left alive and fishing on the metropolitan Heath.

The book shows range and vision, an humane understanding of Douglas's sad separation from his wife Mary although we have yet to see the effect on their son. The scene shifts constantly and adroitly from the regional setting of Cumbria to the media world of London and the *kitsch* ambience of New York. Bragg knows about the nuances of dialogue which differentiate character and can maintain nice dramatic irony. His writing is authentic. He can also capture an atmosphere of chilling menace. Douglas's cousin Lester, travelling by train to Cumbria, is threatened on the claustrophobic journey by celebrating Scotsmen. Locked in the lavatory he hears a threatening Glaswegian whine, 'We're goan tae hurt you Jimmie. Eh? Eh?'

Sexual mores of the Seventies represented by the intimacies of Douglas and his mistress, Hilda – we are privy to her sexual moanings – are not pornographic, so permissive have we become by the Eighties. Merlin Raven, ageing pop-idol, bisexual (mostly homo-), after his rave come-back contrives to have sex in the backstage corridor immediately after his concert, and diagnoses the Sixties as the cause of all our troubles: 'Why do we live like pigs? Tell me that. Did the Sixties almost destroy us?'

The fictional equivalent of the Bookeresque studies on the Seventies, this novel might just have too many petty contemporary details to allow it a long survival. Lester imagines himself to be the 'tough brother in *The Godfather*' or Kojak. There are references to *Apocalypse Now*, Dennis Potter, Alan Bennett, the Shah, Studio 54 and Regine's, Princess Margaret flying in from the Caribbean, Nureyev from Caracas. Nigel Dempster leaks gossip. Hockney does the poster for Merlin's American show.

At least young John looks to the future. Bragg should take us on to a Tallentire saga of the Eighties, by which time, let us hope he has a better opinion of NEW STATESMAN competitions: it appears they are evidence of self-castration.

By comparison, Gabriel Josipovici's novel is skeletal. With the help of Wallace Stevens we know that the echo chamber is the mind, but curiously the dust-cover shows a view of where the action, if so it can be called, takes place as seen through the middle of a jammy dodger. Bragg amid the media-men emphasised that for the publisher '35,000 words are hopeless'. Josipovici got away with it. The narrative is economical, taut, staccato: 'The little boy went on coughing. Nancy patted his back then got up.' The dialogue follows suit, and the book hiccups along in short sections. In style the novel is experimentalist. The protagonist Peter trembles along towards the resolution of his breakdown at an 'intersection time'. He searches for his memory in the present and, with the aid of the faceless Vonnie, and after much grass sucking in the woods, suffers a major attack of *déjà vu*. Meanwhile we have met relations of Vonnie numerous enough to need a family tree on the inside cover. Experimentalist in a practical sense, Isy, a refugee from *Cold Comfort Farm*, gets the adrenal glands going. Otherwise, it is difficult not to agree with Peter, 'The whole family wants to make me puke.' Bragg might have done something with this crowd.

To appreciate novels of the Eighties, it seems you have to know your Wallace Stevens. *The Blue Guitar* is about 'things as they are', but this time in Australia. We follow the financial adventures of Dyson Garrick, failed property developer and promoter of a patent guitar. Confident as businessman with family and friends, Garrick has exposed his financial Achilles' heel to his rivals: he manoeuvres to fend off the mortal blow.

Hasluck tells the story at a rapid pace and with racy charm. There is some refreshingly Australian talking from the hip, 'When a company's being milked, you don't look for a bucket under its tits. You look up its arse.' And there are some very funny scenes, one when the drunken hero commandeers the microphone at a hospital staff meeting on pay and conditions to ask for his girlfriend, another an attempted seduction in a car at a petrol station forecourt. There are satirical patches: an Alf Garnett Brit exclaims, 'You ain't got no cultcha, 'ave you, then? Fuck all. No Battersea Fair,' and Hasluck sees through wandering academics who make for 'Bristol, Auckland, Vancouver. Anywhere with a jugular vein and a juicy budget.' At the finish Garrick is ahead of the field: Hasluck hasn't done so badly either.

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ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT

Andrew Clements

Levels of Greatness

It might seem perverse to begin what is intended to be a survey of recent new record releases with a medium-price reissue. But Sviatoslav Richter's recordings of Schubert's A major Piano Sonata D664 and the *Wanderer* Fantasy (EMI SXLP 30297) is a disc of consummate greatness, which should never have been allowed to leave the catalogue and which must be welcomed back in the most fulsome of critical clichés. Richter has long held Schubert in special regard; this record was made in Paris in 1963, but exactly a year ago in the Festival Hall he gave an all-Schubert recital, recently re-broadcast, that even by his unique standards was an extraordinary piece of music-making. That recital also included this A major Sonata, now viewed even more spaciously but with the same poise and purity, the same complete fidelity to the composer's text. No other pianist would dare to take the first movement of the sonata so leisurely and equally no one could invest the *Wanderer* Fantasy with quite the same charge and passion. The first and last sections storm along, but the piano writing always remains completely clear, textures are never saturated, rhythms stay crisp and precise. It is a remarkable record.

Two other piano issues are certainly out of the normal run of releases, but not entirely for the quality of their performances. Both are of keyboard works by Bach, and both pianists have created reputations out of transfiguring Bach on the piano. Rosalyn Tureck's old recordings of the B minor Partita and the *Italian Concerto* (EMI SXLP 30416) now have rather a grand period feel to them, as if more recent scholarly styles of playing these works have taken the edge off what once seemed elegant, tasteful interpretations. There remains no doubt of the quality of her technique – smooth and light of touch, with a fine control of the extremes of dynamic range – but the pacing of some of the movements of the Partita seems very mannered. If mannered playing is what you are after, then look no further than Glenn Gould's series of Bach recordings. What began more than 20 years ago with a famous version of the *Goldberg* Variations and continued through the 48 Preludes and Fugues and the Suites and Partitas has now reached the early Toccatas. Gould plays three of them (in D major, F sharp minor and D minor) on CBS 76881, and the usual tics are all in evidence. The piano sound is dry and shallow, Gould tends to provide a crooned accompaniment to everything he plays, and some passages, particularly in slow music, are pulled wickedly out of shape. Yet the freshness of his approach still comes through; the clarity of the contrapuntal writing is superb (the four-part fugue that ends the F sharp minor Toccata is a fine example) and his ability to project rhythmic shape compensates for many idiosyncracies. Within the strict technical and aesthetic limits he has set himself Gould's playing is almost entirely successful.

The better the record, the less comment it requires. The Quartetto Italiano's selection of Boccherini string quartets (Philips 9500 305) could have included a completely different trio of works and remained equally satisfying; the music is charming and unpretentious, the performances delightful. Boccherini's historical importance (he was writing authentic string quartets before either Haydn or Mozart, yet failed to consolidate his achievement) has tended to count for more than the intrinsic charm of his music. Anyone who thinks that the Quartetto Italiano is wasted on such seemingly slight material would do well to discover the total unanimity and command involved in producing music-making of this calibre. The Juilliard Quartet's set of the Mozart string quintets with the violist John Graham (CBS 79322, three records) is not on quite the same level of accomplishment, but the interpretative demands are infinitely greater. The quintets are not especially well served on record at present and arguably this is the safest version available. The players are of course finely matched and none of them ever does anything that is less than civilised, but there seems a feeling of anonymity about the performances, moderate and respectful, yet lacking any revelatory *apercus*.

The same description could be applied equally to a collection of Schubert's complete music for violin and piano played by Nell and Ivar Gotkovsky (RCA RL 37129, three records). The set does not contain any masterpieces, though the three Sonatas are charming; the later violin music is thin on invention (strange for such an endlessly inventive composer) and heavy on commonplace bravura figuration. The Gotkovskys work their way through everything with relentless efficiency: perhaps the earlier works could sound sweeter – the violin always has an aggressive edge to its tone – but Schubert addicts who demand completeness are unlikely to get another opportunity to add all these works to their collections in the foreseeable future.

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields Chamber Ensemble provides performances of Mendelssohn's Octet and String Quintet Op. 87 that are a good deal less unwieldy than the name of the group (Philips 9500 616). The version of the Octet is ferociously attacking at times; Mendelssohn's teenage genius is made to seem tighter and less indulgent than it can in some versions, and the Quintet is a logical, if sadly revealing coupling. Written 20 years later, its first movement at least is a vain attempt to recapture the spirit and impact of the opening of the Octet, but it subsides all too soon into earnest, academic note-spinning.

Deutsche Grammophon's collection of Wilhelm Furtwängler's recordings of Bruckner symphonies (DG 2740 201, five records) recommends itself, even though the sound won't suit those who enjoy Bruckner most of all for the chance to wallow in terraces of mellow orchestral sonority. The mono tapes transferred here are just about acceptable. All are taken from concert performances: the Fourth and Seventh in 1951, the Eighth and Ninth in 1944, shared between the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras. Only the Fourth has not been available previously on LP in this country, and that in many ways is the most treasurable performance in the set the Vienna Philharmonic restored to its finest form and Furtwängler at his most transcendental, taking liberties with dynamics and pacing that no other conductor would contemplate, and welding the whole construction (decidedly tacky at times in the Fourth) into a single finely tuned arch. The Eighth (again with the VPO) is equally magnificent. There is an extraordinary contrast between scherzo and trio, the trio taken so sedately as to become a second slow movement; the slow movement proper and finale are great architectural spans, articulated by orchestra climaxes that can penetrate even the ruderies of the recording. As with his Wagner, Furtwängler's Bruckner simply *sounds* infinitely superior to anyone else's.

Eugen Jochum's release of the first Bruckner symphony is a high-spirited instalment in his new cycle of the symphonies with the Dresden Staatskapelle for EMI (ASD 3825). Of present-day Bruckner conductors Jochum seems the most obviously 'old-fashioned', yet the earthiness of the performance – the composer here at his closest to his bucolic roots – seems the work of much younger man. Anyone setting out to collect a modern stereo set of the canon would be well advised to follow Jochum through, though they should always return periodically to Furtwängler for spiritual guidance.

A pair of releases of contemporary music to close, both of them masterpieces or at least near-misses. I reviewed Peter Maxwell Davies's Symphony here at length when it was first performed in February 1978; the recording with the same forces that gave the premiere (the Philharmonia Orchestra conducted by Simon Rattle) gives a chance for an even wider audience to hear a work which gave new life to the ageing symphonic mainstream and confirmed for many of Davies's admirers the promise of earlier orchestral scores (Decca Headline HEAD 21). I am now less convinced by the work than I was two years ago even then the amelioration of the musical language seemed to jar with the sharp edge of the construction, and now greater familiarity suggests a lack of surprise in the working out of the musical ideas.

Nicholas Maw's *Lifestudies* was first performed at the Cheltenham Festival in 1973 as a group of seven pieces; an eighth study was added later and the complete set has been recorded by the Academy of St Martin in the Fields (Argo ZRG 899). Maw's music is less often heard than that of many of his contemporaries (he was born in 1935); there is relatively little of it and new works emerge painfully slowly. *Lifestudies* seems to me a very remarkable piece of string writing; the characteristic mingling of tonal music and serial working, together with back reference to the tradition of the string orchestra in Britain which began with Elgar and continues up to Tippett, produces a very potent blend of *espressivo*. Maw is singular in his ability to find original things to say within a broad and traditional framework; *Lifestudies* demonstrates that ability most beautifully.

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Art

John Spurling

On the Boil

Edward Burra: Paintings from America *Lefevre*
John Walker *Nigel Greenwood, 41 Sloane Gardens, SW1*

In Burra's *The Riot* a red horde carrying huge firebrands surges forward out of the picture. The rioters are not so much coming at the spectator as, because of their movement towards bottom left, knocking him aside with their brawny forearms and swollen fists. Behind them is a de Chirico set of tall, empty facades seen end-on. Burra's episodes of sex and violence, unlike the surrealists', are heavily peopled and on the boil. The thing is about to happen, there and then, or is already happening. His world, however offensively so, is warm and active, fleshed and sweaty, nearer to Grosz's lurid city-scenes than to the cold, symbolic nightmares of Surrealism. Yet where Grosz's picture-space is a mental construct – viewed as it were from a swaying balloon – Burra's is foursquare and solid, seen from in front and somewhat below. From the front stalls at the local fleapit, perhaps. Bryan Robertson reminds us, in his foreword to the Lefevre catalogue, that Burra 'was a film addict all his life'.

But in spite of its close-up immediacy, Burra's sex and violence is still at one remove. The viewer has time to register a comment, though it is nothing like so worked-out as Grosz's political satire, more the kind of waspish aside for which Burra was noted among his friends. 'No artist personally known to me,' wrote Sir John Rothenstein when Burra's work was shown at the Tate in 1973, 'has led a more sequestered life.' It seems at first an odd judgment, considering how much he travelled, that he took special delight in bars and dives, designed sets for four ballets and an opera and latterly showed his work at regular two-yearly intervals. Nevertheless he seems always to have been the mocking spectator, never the participant. Anthony Powell records his being interrogated by Hermione Baddeley:

> 'Have you ever loved a man?'
> 'No.'
> 'Have you ever loved a woman?'
> 'No.'
> 'Not even your mother?'
> There was a short pause while Burra considered the matter. A conclusion was reached.
> 'No.'

Burra, then, is no Goya. It is not a whole world and time he is trying to express, but a corner of Vanity Fair. The sex and violence are those of others, fascinating, amusing, grotesque, occasionally menacing; but even when the nearest figures are so close as to have their faces blurred and squashed as if by stocking-masks or being pressed against glass, there is no inward recognition. They are merely images of the violent world's brief impingement on the observer.

The ten watercolours at the Lefevre were left behind in America (where Burra took them for exhibition) in the care of his close friends, Conrad and Mary Aiken. Among them are two very unsatisfactory paintings on religious themes which suggest how essential it was to Burra to *see* what he was painting, not simply to invent it; just as of the two building-site paintings, *Excavation* and *Construction*, the former is improved by not having its foreground filled with large, too stagily sinister birds. On the other hand, in the bar-scene *Salome*, where the mountainous red bar-maid and her dwarfed customers all have bird heads and only the joint on the platter turns out to be a human head, the metamorphosis is integral to the painter's view of his human figures, an effect of observation more than of imagination. Burra's imaginative energy goes into his lighting. The inertia of the religious paintings partly consists in their unconvincing figures and contrived landscapes, but even more in their lacking that diagonal beam of light which in *Silver Dollar Bar*, *Izzy Orts* or *Tropical Bar Scene* brings arms, torsos, hips, bottles, a dangling cigarette or a grimace to life as it travels through to the background. Add to that the romantically beckoning tourist backdrops of mountains or palm-trees, the baroque contortions of the figures, the contrast of round black faces with long, lugubrious white ones, the glistening punctuation marks of teeth and eyes, and you have what amounts less to a fear or indictment of sex and violence than an admission that without them there'd be precious little worth looking at.

John Walker is noted for his bold, brash abstracts on a huge scale. Seen in mixed public exhibitions they can seem overbearing and rather slapdash – sharp-edged shapes, harsh

"Well, he's almost cured. All he does now is steal his own underwear."

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. . . so much for our natty Menswear Issue. There's also KENNETH ROBINSON sinking his fangs into broadcasting, ROBERT MORLEY ditto fangs Australia, plus ALAN COREN, BENNY GREEN, PAUL JENNINGS, HUNTER DAVIES, SIMON HOGGART, BARRY TOOK, ALAN BRIEN, RICHARD BOSTON . . .

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colours and rough paintwork. Seen among themselves in the more domestic circumstances of the Nigel Greenwood Gallery, their subtleties become apparent. Surprisingly, considering their size and public manner, they need to be examined at close quarters, for their colours especially and, in these latest paintings, for their surface texture. To his existing repertory of devices – including collage, calligraphy, elements of decorative pattern and an almost archaeological sense of layers laid over one another – he has now added the use of wax, making the colours more brilliant, the layers more transparent and the surface itself more agitated. He has also committed what, for pure abstractionists, has always been the sin against the Holy Ghost: to suggest depth, to open out an illusory space, to take you round his shapes towards a horizon and make a painted wall feel like a room. Most of the well-aired arguments have centred on figuration versus abstraction; but isn't it really the third dimension one misses more than figures or objects *per se*? Walker has used recognisable decorative motifs in the past and in several of these paintings there is a Matisse-like tablecloth – but now some of his shapes have begun to fill out, to acquire solidity, if only by a kind of half-teasing implication. Since this exhibition is the first of two and nearly all the work has been done in the last few months, it's evident that however much other artists may deplore Walker's 'sin', he is having a whale of a time. The Tate, which is short of Walkers, should overcome its penchant for minnows, and make a purchase.

Theatre

Benedict Nightingale

Thin Greed

Dr Faustus by MARLOWE *Fortune*
Threads by JOHN BYRNE *Hampstead*
Viaduct by PAUL COPLEY *Bush*
On the Twentieth Century Limited by BETTY COMDEN, ADOLPH GREEN and CY COLEMAN *Her Majesty's*

Everyone seems to be admiring Christopher Fettes's economy-pack *Faustus*, and I have no inclination to play Banquo at the feast. It is indeed remarkable how much is achieved with one long table, a few Elizabethan chairs, eight male actors, and a giant shower-curtain behind which there disports, among other half-visible curiosities, the thinnest and hungriest version of Gluttony anyone could conceive. This particular invention is, as it turns out, very characteristic of the evening, which is imaginatively daring yet succeeds in extracting the fustian from *Faustus*, so that the play itself emerges as part-dream, part-parable, simultaneously strange, wonderful, and as unsensational as last Sunday's sermon. The tone at times becomes perilously low-key; but somehow it seems to fit Marlowe's lock.

Agreed, the servant sub-plot goes for very little, though some might say that very little is precisely what it should go for. Agreed, it is a mite odd when an anonymous scholar studiously poring over his books at first turns out to be Faustus's Evil Angel, and a moment later becomes a fellow don, all solicitous for his soul. We, no less than Mr Fettes, must use what nature gave us in the way of imagination. But if we allow ourselves to be sucked into the somewhat stark university library in which the action mainly occurs, there's plenty to reward us: the conjurors Valdes and Cornelius advancing ominously on Faustus in their academic gowns, one a great, bunched crow, the other a skinny giant peering balefully through pebble lenses from the security of the antique wheelchair in which he's perched; Simon Cutter's handsome Helen, scorching the other characters' eyes by dint of sheer proximity, and, at the very end, snapping Faustus's neck and scratching out his soul with the same unblinking serenity; and, of course, the principals themselves.

One of the oddities we're asked to swallow is that James Aubrey's Faustus doesn't age in the course of 24 years; and yet this is imaginatively absolutely right, since he squanders them all on exaggerated versions of the kind of trumpery amusements that most of us manage to renounce between our first and second childhoods. Fancy forfeiting eternal bliss in order to play pranks on the Pope, or check whether or not Alexander the Great's paramour had a wart on her neck. Mr Aubrey, with his boyishly wide eyes, breathless enthusiasm, and pre-Raphaelite looks and posturings, has the temperament to explain much of this. I confess I didn't find him particularly moving at the end, when he tries literally if unsuccessfully to 'leap up to my God' across the table top; but up to that point he plays the immature romantic more absorbingly than one could have predicted.

The really riveting performance, though, comes from Patrick Magee, an actor with a strange, sandpapery wail for a voice and a habit of playing exorbitant cadenzas upon it. But this time he's as muted as I've ever seen him, and, paradoxically, the more eloquent for being so. His silky-toned Mephistopheles contemplates his work bleakly and Faustus himself with a certain grim sympathy. Even 'I'll fetch somewhat to delight him much' is put across by Magee with the numb melancholy of someone who knows from experience just how empty all available delights actually are. No braggadocio demon-king this; but a doomed humanoid who has, as he says, seen God and enjoyed Heaven, and now aches with the awareness of their loss.

We first met the main characters of John Byrne's *Threads* in his *Slab Boys*, and here they are out of their paint-mixing room and at the annual dance of the Glasgow company for which they unwillingly work, as unruly and half-comprehensible as ever. Predictably, everything goes wrong. The lights keep cutting out; the coy Miss Walkinshaw, who should be helping with the tombola, gets outrageously drunk, and stages a not-very-convincing mini-rebellion against her possessive mother; and poor little Hector, cast as the weed and wet in this episode as in the last, ends up all bloody and hysterical, victim of other people's machismo and wantonness, themselves the play's twin emphases.

The girls are constantly playing the boys off against each other, and the boys are quick to strike fighting-cock attitudes, their public pugnacity comically undercut by the private self-doubts Mr Byrne has slipped into the sides of their mouths: 'How would you like that fag thrust down your throat . . . Now, what did I say that for?' It is all very funny and affectionate, but not without a troubling undertow, never far from the top. 'You can almost taste the ozone,' remarks one party-goer, leaning over the balcony, and back comes the answer, 'Oh, that's the abattoir, I think'. These young workers, too, have been herded up, caged, and are having the life-blood drawn from them. What future for most of them except another 40 or 45 company dances?

There are nice performances in this from Freddie Boardly and Robbie Coltrane, among others, and a particularly good one in Paul Copley's *Viaduct* from Brian Hayes, a mil-dewed tramp confusedly fumbling through the mental relics of his youth. One sequence which introduces a tumbling pierrot tc dramatise the old man's disappointment at no having joined a travelling circus, venture dangerously near the fey; but otherwise the piece stays safely in the land of the living, a place that turns out also to be populated by ar amiably unambitious brickie, the girl he once fancied, and her bigoted, go-getting young husband. Copley is, I think, indebted tc Robert Holman, in at least one of whose rural-Yorkshire plays he has acted the mair part. He has not, however, yet quite acquirec his model's deft, unobtrusive skills.

Which brings me, wilting slightly, to thi month's overrated musical. It's nominall about a stunningly realised art-deco railroa train; but, with Keith Michell among th passengers as a flamboyant impresario, an Julia Mackenzie boldly bashing the high note as a famous actress, the subject is actually an more drearily Broadway's oldest and mos favourite: itself.

Television

Julian Barnes

Punctuated

Something – possibly an affliction of acu apathy – made me miss the first episode *Vikings!* (BBC-2). But that exclamation ma in the title intrigued me. I mean, it must there deliberately; there must have been least one decision-makers' conference abo it. *Vikings*, tout court, presumably evoked t wrong image: boring, bearded old Norsem whittling away at scrimshaws while the s sank mistily into the ice-bound fiord – th sort of thing. Whereas *Vikings!* clearly mea rape and pillage (and that word 'rapine' whi feigns to combine the two); it meant ea Scandinavian punks worshipping strange gc and, perhaps, a few hundred thousand mc viewers, all for a line and a dot.

To judge from episode two, the exclamati mark is only half pulling its weight. There a violent battles conveyed by animated graph and jagged, Janacekish music (it's a go series for wind and brass members of Musicians' Union); and the long, sleek, cr hulls of the Viking ships definitely deserve punctuation sign. But Magnus Magnusso Just try writing his name with an exclamat mark – like this: Magnus! – and it looks

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wrong, doesn't it? You probably thought for a moment I was referring to someone else. From his very first appearance – strolling along a pebbly beach up North and then lowering his damp anorak hood to address us – the chubby inquisitor makes that exclamation mark sag and wilt on the spot. Reporting the first Viking raid on England in 793, his description of it as 'that Bad Day for Lindisfarne' made it sound like a disappointing result in the Northern Premier League. This strain of the unconscious football commentator, of Magnus Motssonsson, was further extended when he claimed that the Vikings were such successful maritime plunderers 'because they'd put it all together'. At least he didn't have them pulling out the big one.

Mostly, though, the presence of this puffer of holidays in Iceland serves to domesticate the Vikings, and to make the bits of potted history that he does come up with sound rib-ticklingly inauthentic. He asked us to believe first in a king called 'Half Dan the Black' (obviously an early judo expert) and then, immediately afterwards, in his successor 'Harold Finehair'. The latter, apparently, was rejected in love by a neighbouring princess and responded by vowing not to cut or comb his hair until he had conquered the whole of Norway. He travailed at this for nigh on many a year, and ended up running the show; whereupon he coiffed his hair and suddenly looked so amazingly spruce that he was rewarded with both his nickname and his princess. Well, if that's history, I'm Selfridges: Motssonsson has obviously been cribbing from some new Monty Python script.

Question of the week came on *Saturday Night at the Mill* (BBC-1), where a quite unfronic Bob Langley asked Patti Boulaye, still adrip from a crotch-thrusting floor-number, 'What is it about Africans? – you all have this inherent sense of rhythm'. Euphemism of the week came on *Antiques Roadshow* (BBC-1), which, with its telling social mix of horsey-voiced experts and crafty, have-we-won-the-pools owners (their treasures wrapped sneakily in black plastic rubbish bags), remains this column's favourite serial; this, despite the presence of a befringed and hyperactive Angela Rippon. In Oldham last Sunday, Arthur Negus purred convincingly to the owner of a Victorian magazine rack, 'They're liked very much.' A cute use of the passive voice: the lady owner didn't spot that what he was really saying was, '*I* think it's perfectly frightful.' And it was.

Sight of the week was Broderick Munro-Wilson, in a matching flat cap, explaining how he got his weight down low enough to ride in the National (*Grandstand*, BBC-1): 'Black coffee and cigars – which means that it goes in very quick and should go out very quick as well.' Brodders himself went out very quick too, unseated at the fourth. For once, the occasion provided a chance to praise David Coleman, whose pre- and post-race interviews had just the right sort of knowledgeable informality. It was good, for instance, to hear the champion jockey roundly rubbishing his colleagues: 'About 80 per cent of the fellows leave their brains behind when the tapes go up.' One who didn't was Charlie Fenwick; if he invested in himself, he got a handy 40-1.

Still, the biggest sporting upset of the week was elsewhere, in the women's university boat race (*World of Sport*, LWT) which Cambridge had hitherto won 16 times out of the last 16. 'Half pressure – just *squeeze* it up through the water,' the Cambridge cox huskily urged, as the *WOS* cameras followed her crew's build-up; 'They're great fun – I adore them all enormously – I fall in love with all of them,' oozed their squirearchically voiced trainer. But love, for once, was not enough: come boat race day, the light blues were creamed over 2,000 metres of Henley's best.

Why Didn't They Ask Evans? (LWT). Maybe because he would have told them to cut it by two hours, and spend the half million spare on plausible thrillers by living writers.

Ballet

Bryan Robertson

Coexistence

Bell High *Ballet Rambert, Sadler's Wells*

We can find in the relationship of figures to landscape in painting distant yet quite distinct analogies to the way in which music, in modern dance, relates to choreography. Figures can exist on almost equal or complementary terms with the landscape which serves as an aesthetically and psychologically balanced context for their actions, and even for their presence; we find this happening in Giotto or in Poussin. But in other paintings of different

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periods, the landscape is merely a supportive context, a decorative background for the foreground drama played out by the figures, with an occasional echo of substance, direction or shape, as in Tiepolo or in Gainsborough. In the work of other artists, Van Gogh or Munch for instance, the figures appear to be conjured up by the landscape as an extension of its character: the figures not only reflect their context but are dominated by it.

In modern dance, there is a similarly fluctuating relationship between music and choreography. The first impulse for a dance movement does not always spring from music: it can be perceptually aroused by some chance action or gesture observed in life, and the disciplined formality which can best express that movement through choreography has to find the specific music to counterpoint the movement or to support it. Some modern dance appears to go against the music that purports to accompany it, and this works well if connections are disclosed at certain intervals, or intermediary stages, as a kind of re-linking or climactic measure. Richard Alston's first ballet, *Bell High*, for the Rambert Company, seen last week at Sadlers Wells, marks his début as the company's Resident Choreographer and presents some problems because there seems to be no connection at all between the choreography and the music for clarinet, percussion and piano by Maxwell Davies selected for it.

There is no question of Alston's brilliance. What happens on stage for six male and six female dancers is fast-paced, clean, sharp action which, though abstract in the sense that there's no apparent story, is always decisively shaped in a swiftly flowing series of *pas de deux*, *trois* or *quatre* with frequently emphasised divisions between the sexes. But unlike Alston's earlier ballet, *Rainbow Bandit*, this new work seems to lack sustained focus and, most centrally, has no dramatic rise and fall, forward drive or dominant sense of dramatic purpose. Almost all the connected dances have the same coolly measured pace, apart from the slow, sweepingly ceremonial gestures which start the ballet and finally bring down the curtain. There is an air of contrivance, or lack of centre.

Rainbow Bandit, one of the best of all recent ballets, used dancers, wearing body stockings in more or less primary colours, to move at almost incessant high speed like soaring and darting humming-birds. It was danced in silence until a taped voice began to repeat at irregular intervals the phrase itself 'Rainbow Bandit', separating the words, reversing them and then inverting the phrase almost as a neutrally unstressed syncopation. The action on stage and this sound co-existed, each retaining its own identity; and if there was no sense of mere 'accompaniment' there was an untricky sense of amiable interdependence. Alston's time with Merle Cunningham may have affected this ballet.

But the Maxwell Davies pieces for clarinet, largely solo – 'Stedman Doubles' and 'Hymons' which are performed at the same time as *Bell High* – I won't say accompany it – are strenuously noisy, arbitrarily emphatic and so obtrusively raucous in pitch that they're a real distraction from what is happening on stage. Given this composer's many and obvious splendours, he still has a suspect theatrical sense which can almost do, somewhat cerebrally, for music what Ken Russell came to do for film. But *Bell High* is still good to watch with its crispy neutral costumes, black-lines-on-white grid floor, and big skylight which begins by seeming to paraphrase the floor and then, as 'Hymons' begins, slowly revolves, extends its angle and turns into a mirror for the dancers below. The sight of dancers' heads and foreshortened bodies seen in the mirror from above adds an odd dimension to the ballet, and the designs and lighting by Peter Mumford are notably superior to most of the tired props that afflict ballet these days, classical or modern.

Films

John Coleman

With Ghostly Aid

Tom Horn (AA) *Columbia; Warner; Classic, Oxford Street; Scene; ABCs Bayswater, Fulham and Edgware Roads*
Les Enfants du Paradis *Academy One*
Santiago Alvarez *at the NFT, 1-10 April*

Tom Horn, a name so available to anagrammatists that it has to be real, turns out to have been just that: real. He was one of the fastest guns in the West, an ace with a Winchester from Wyoming, back in Gentleman Jim Corbett's time. Steve McQueen, looking like a midget Gary Cooper revived, plays this true-life thug, who got caught on a bad rap – child murder – to the holster. The film is by turns exciting, exasperating, exacerbating. It attempts to pursue the career of this pug-ugly Horn with some attention; it has clearly returned to the source-book, a strange document compiled by Horn presumably with ghostly aid; it has a great, careful alertness to decor – how the new-sprung Western township would appear then: oddly fresh, smelling of a redolence of timber suddenly thrown into house-shapes.

It also has a disastrous tendency to go quite Disneyland. The outlaw, Horn, is caught against landscapes, twilight backdrops, as if in Bambi-land silhouette. A very attractive girl (Linda Evans) is imported to give some of these events significance – no, hardly that, more like a sexual thrill or frisson. There are some hellish hard lines. 'He needs to hang you to get elected,' explains a mildish officer of the law to the offender. But make no mistake: the gentleman *is* an offender. For all the creased charm of McQueen's performance, for all the dramatic horse-play, Horn was evidently a murderer and a shit; and it is wrong of the film, its writers and its director, William Wiard, to attempt to persuade us otherwise. If it does.

My first and most glamorous encounters with the silver screen – as we used to call it – were not Hollywooden. They were French and I could reel off a list to make the eyes of those who had them to see with then both roll about and water. There are many and several opinions about, for example, *Les Enfants du Paradis*. Mine is clear. I adore it and, for better or worse, it helped to whet my appetite for more of the same. The Academy has had the inspired good sense to revive it. No thanks to the exigencies of Easter, one has not had a chance to look at their refreshed copy of it or read their (I am told) improved subtitles. That is another pleasure in store. Meanwhile, I have turned up a review of the piece hauled back from May 1964. The temptation to quote it in all its beauty and brilliance is strong, but is to be resisted. Let me rather cheat a little – about this strong, shallow length of Gallic film-novel or novel-film, a sort of *roman-fleuve* or, better, probably over-plotted occasion. I am going back to the words of one of the unique couple who got the show on the road, and that during black days for France. They are actually Marcel Carné's, in interview with Marie Portal, lifted from a Lorrimer paperback transcript, as it were, published in 1968.

> Ah well! *Les Enfants du Paradis* is a tribute to the theatre; nowadays, it would be known as the children of the gods; they are the actors, the beloved heroes of the public . . . We tried to retrace the lives of Frederick Lemaître and Baptiste Debureau at the beginning of their careers, as well as that of Lancenaire, who was a well-known dandy on the Boulevard du Crime in those days; but even though these people really existed, the action itself is imaginary. It takes place in about 1840 . . .

For a few of us, it takes place forever. Arletty, with that exquisite, unforgettable, irreplaceable, calm and whorish beauty of hers – that female strength against male stress (she was always going to be the winner) – in her last struggle through a throng, albeit in a carriage, is both endearing and a threat: cinema has changed and the loss of her is a loss to it. A very substantial degree of warmth and enticement has left the film arena.

A couple of words, at least, for a season currently mounted by Derek Malcolm, at the National Film Theatre. The word goes that the work of Santiago Alvarez is worth more than an idle glance. Recommended, but by Cuban mouths, not mine. Take it on trust, should you feel that way inclined. Otherwise, do the simple thing and go to the Academy, like gallery-children.

Weekend Competition

No 2611 **Set by A. Boteman**
Having asked you to down-date current marketing techniques, we now want you to practice further chronological flexibility and update snatches of folk wisdom – little rhymes about the weather, country saws etc.; prose or verse; must be modelled on traditional patterns or convince us that they are, but be utterly of the Eighties. By 18 April.

No 2608 **Set by E. O. Parrott**
We asked for commercial jingles for equipment which we had, mistakenly, imagined to be obsolete.

Report **By Ms de Meaner**
What a ghoulish, sexist lot you are. Chastity belts were top favourites, closely followed by torture instruments of all shapes and sizes. What we were actually looking for was the ability to combine mindlessly rhythmic sing-a-long-ability – the kind of thing which lodges in your mind in spite of yourself – with just a

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soupçon of wit or wisdom or some other *je ne sais quoi* sufficient to justify inclusion in the precious space allotted to the Complex. Not as easy as it sounds, but those printed below are all valiant efforts and will be rewarded with seven quid apiece.

Vote, vote, vote for Whitelaw Thumbscrews:
Don't be sorry, just be sure.
British-made by private steel
They will make your villain squeal,
And he won't be so light-fingered any more.
Turn, turn, turn the little lever.
Snap! Crack! Pop! will go the bone.
If a suspect's playing dumb
Fit a Whitelaw on his thumb,
And he'll want to talk until the cows come home.

BASIL RANSOME-DAVIES

Stacks and stacks and stacks of stocks,
Keys to please and tax-free locks –
Pop your head in at our store –
Test our best, then buy a score!
STOXO stocks can guarantee
A box of rotten eggs for free –
Bag your vagabonds, better move fast –
Better buy STOXO – while stocks last!

BILL GREENWELL

Persuasion is nicer with Rackamate;
The new 'Torquemada' is great
For rebels, dissenters and those who protest
The SPG's friend is sure to prove best.
Now under the law bosses may like
To use it on those who dare go on strike;
So send us your money and tell every wretch
If he raises a murmur he's in for a stretch.

P. W. R. FOOT

Owen's Onager gives Into-City Speed,
Makes sieges easier, the one besiegers need.
With easy aiming and prices lower,
You'll be a bolder boulder-thrower.
If you're knowin' with your Owen,
You'll know where your missiles goin'
Put an Onager by Owen
In your Into-City throwin'.

PAT BLACKFORD

Chorus of serving-wenches
Bozzy puts on Leatherlite,
Leatherlite, Leatherlite,
Bozzy puts on Leatherlite
To keep germs away.

Boswell
'Cos ye can put them on, ye ken,
Then tak' them off tae wash and then
Ye can put them on again
At work or at play

Dr Johnson
Leatherlite fingerstalls. Of all good
Barbers and Chirurgeons. (*Opens dictionary.*)
Bio-degradable. Bio-logical. Buy a packet.

J. H. BENTLEY

Cuckoo! Cuckoo! Word of fear,
Unpleasing to a married ear –
That's the way that Shakespeare felt
Before Smith's Non-Slip Vestal Belt;
This device with lock by Chubb is
Best wife-guard for absent hubbies,
Saves the hymen from stray he-men,
Fends off all illicit semen;
Lust-proof, rust-proof, it's a wow!
At your friendly sex-shop NOW!

STANLEY J. SHARPLESS

Why not try our BLACK MARIA?
Buy our tumbril dire, squire,
Roomy, gloomy, plenty of fun,
'Cause 20 heads are better than one.

WILL BELLENGER

Jousting men, the problem's thorny,
Even when you're big and brawny.
Absence makes a wife real horny –
Clunk, click every tourney.

TIM HOPKINS

Tony Miles

Chess

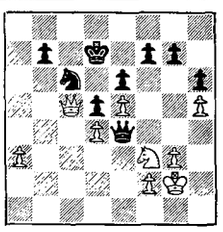
No 174 **Reykjavik Round-up**

The 9th Reykjavik International tournament was a great success for the Russian IM Kupreichik. It became clear from the first round that this was going to be his lucky tournament; playing the American GM Robert Byrne he was a piece down for nothing when his opponent fell victim to the dreaded 'Icelandic Modern' time limit. Unlike normal tournaments which are played at the rate of 40 moves in 2½ hours, the Reykjavik events are played at 30 in 1½ and 20 in 1 all in the first session (the idea is to provide more excitement for the spectators). Anyway, Byrne had played his 30 moves safely and was winning easily when he forgot about the time limit and, thinking he had to play another 10 moves, played quickly, blundered and lost.

So it went on, Kupreichik staggered through the tournament consistently winning his lost positions and emerged at the end remarkably unbeaten with 8½/12 and a GM norm. The American Browne came second with 7½ and, despite playing atrociously throughout, I shared third with Sosonko on 7. The event was slightly marred by the withdrawal of the Norwegian player Helmers after 6 rounds. As he had not completed half his games his score was anulled (which was rather annoying as I had beaten him). However, before he left he was on the receiving end of a nice miniature by Sosonko.

White: G. Sosonko **Black: K. Helmers**
P-Q4, N-KB3; 2.P-QB4, P-K3; 3.N-KB3, P-QN3; 4.P-KN3, B-R3; 5.QN-Q2, P-B4; 6.P-K4!? B-N2? A serious potential error. Whilst this was good on the previous move now it must be prefaced by 6 . . .PxP. **7. P-Q5!** The bishop on QN2 is now shut out of the game. **7 . . . PxP; 8.KPxP, B-K2; 9.B-N2, P-Q3; 10.O-O. O-O; 11.P-N3, QN-Q2; 12.B-N2, N-K1; 13.Q-B2, P-KR3; 14.QR-K1, Q-B2; 15.N-R4, B-KB1; 16.N-K4, NxN; 17.BxN, B-K2; 18.N-B5, B-KB3; 19.R-K2, P-KR4; 20.KR-K1, BxB; 21QxB, N-B3; 22.B-B2.** Actually 22. B-Q3 is a little more accurate, but the text sets a neat trap. **22 . . .RxR; 23.RxR, R-K1?** One other amusing possibility is 23 . . . K-B1; 24.Q-B1, R-K1; 25.Q-N5!? RxR; 26.QxPch, K-K1; 27.Q-R8ch! K-Q2; 28.QxN, RxB; 29.QxBPch, K-B1; 30.Q-K8ch, Q-Q1; 31.NxPch, K-B2; 32.N-N5ch, K-B1; 33.NxPch, K-B2; 34.P-Q6ch! QxP; 35. N-N5 mate! Now the end comes even quicker. **24.QxN! PxQ; 25.RxRch, K-R2** and Black resigned. 25.R-K7, Q-B1; 26.RxPch, K-R1; 27.N-R6 wins everything.

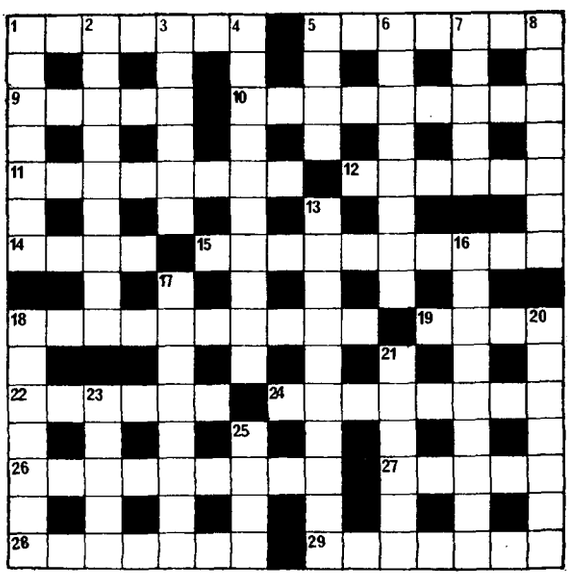
Problem 174
White to play. How should the game go? Answers to me at the NEW STATESMAN postmarked no later than 16 April.



Solution to problem 172
1.R-B8! BxR; 2.N-B6!! R-Q4; 3.RxRch, K-N2; 4.R-N8ch! Resigns.

Weekend Crossword 1338

PRIZES: Book tokens of £2 for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1338, New Statesman, Great Turnstile, London WC1V 7HJ, by first post 15 April.



ACROSS

1 Dandified heavy drinkers hold a variety of pop (7).
5 Part of London which sounds enormous (7).
9 Crooked man so makes a complaint (5).
10 Potentially lethal and big as a bonfire is (9).
11 A fool trod awkwardly in church (8).
12 Quantities of paper make up theses (6).
14 Money left with annoyance (4).
15 The qualities of respectable relationships (10).
18 To live behind the street in forbidding circumstances for vegetables (5, 5).
19 Appointment as the mark of victory (4).
22 Frenchman has to study after anaesthetic (6).
24 Ferments with what helps to produce beer for the factory (8).
26 Tries to sell an axe for a turtle (9).
27 Food for the brink (5).
28 Although sat on by royalty they are unusually honest about a king (7).
29 Exists between breaks and doesn't yield (7).

DOWN

1 Of iron virtue in matters of the thigh (7).
2 Composition changes into air in middle of river (5, 4).
3 'Yet ev'n these bones from — to protect' (Gray) (6).
4 Schoolmaster who abhorred rackers of orthography (10).
5 Jokers existed without gravity (4).
6 Those who throw pots? (8).
7 Moisten but reduced in me after one (5).
8 One of these animal products has country sound (7).
13 His success depends upon getting a break (4, 6).
16 Theories about different lines on map (9).
17 Right of patronage causes a fellow to be interrupted by promises (8).
18 The game killed in Surrey? (7).
20 Capes have suggestion for backing favourites (7).
21 Misses out about a thousand making economies (6).
23 Channel by the Needles? (5).
25 Means of predicting reverse of certain winner (4).

SETSQUARE

Solution to No 1337

M. M. Kalischer (Leeds)
Mrs J. J. Serhus (Fowey)
G. Smith (Warley)

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APPOINTMENTS

NACRO

SAFE NEIGHBOURHOODS UNIT

NACRO have been awarded a three year grant by the Greater London Council to set up and run a Safe Neighbourhoods Unit. The Unit is to work with residents to improve the quality of life on GLC estates.
The approach will be, through consultations, to involve residents in the planning of improvements to their environments and in the management of services and facilities from both the statutory and voluntary sectors.

Applications are now invited for the following posts:

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£8,300 (rising to £8,600) + £780 London Weighting.
Will set up and run the Unit. Knowledge of local authority services and ability to negotiate at different levels essential.

Development Officers (Two Posts)

£6,500 (rising to £6,650) + £780 London Weighting.
Will work with residents and local community organisations on the consultative process and consequent developments.

Clerical Officer

£3,600 + £780 London Weighting.
The Clerical Officer has a crucial role to play in providing the Unit with a sound administrative base. Typing essential.
We think these posts may appeal to people already working in **Local Government Departments, Social Services, Probation, Police or Community Work.** Secondments will be welcome.

Write for Application Form and Job Description to: **Robert Beech, Secretary, NACRO, 169 Clapham Road, London SW9 0PU.** Closind date **28 April 1980.**

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Applications for this appointment, which should include particulars of age, educational qualifications, present and previous employment and trade union experience, must be received not later than **Friday 18 April 1980,** addressed to **the General Secretary, Society of Civil & Public Servants, 124/130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU** from whom application forms can be obtained. Interviews will be held on **Friday 2 May 1980.**

VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
New Zealand

Applications are invited for the following post:

POLITICAL SCIENCE

Lectureship in the School of Political Science and Public Administration

from 1 February 1981. The vacancy is in the general area of international relations. The successful applicant will be expected to help teach courses at the second and third year undergraduate level, and an honours course. In addition a capacity to teach an introductory course in communist systems may be an advantage. Enquiries on the nature of the position to Professor Margaret Clark, Chairman of the School, in the University.
CLOSING DATE: **15 June 1980.**
SALARIES: The salary scale for lecturers NZ$13,722 - $16,861 p.a. Fares paid to New Zealand.
CONDITIONS OF APPOINTMENT: Prospective applicants should obtain conditions of appointment and method of application from the **Association of Commonwealth Universities (Appts), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF.**

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require a

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Applications to **Mr S. Forty, Administration Officer, Transport House, Smith Square, London SW1, by 11 April 1980.**

CIIR

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Co-ordinator

required to administer the existing development programme and evaluate small-scale community projects in Honduras. He/she will also liaise with the Nicaraguan government to investigate the possibility of establishing a programme in that country. Previous Central American experience an asset. Couples wishing to work on a job-sharing basis welcome to apply.

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Contact: **CIIR, 1 Cambridge Terrace, London NW1. 01-487 4397** submitting a full C.V.

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For further details please contact **Richard Harris, 46 Bruce Road, London E3 3HL** or Telephone **01-981 5502.**

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In addition, an amount of $A1,500 p.a. towards fees and expenses including the purchase and maintenance of equipment may be paid to the University where the Fellow is working.

A Fellow shall take up a Fellowship before attaining the age of twenty-eight. The Fellowships are open to graduates of any University who have had at least three years postgraduate experience in research. The Fellowships are not open to permanent members of academic staff or applicants proceeding on sabbatical, study or other leave (including leave without pay). The Fellowships must be held at an Australian University.

Application forms and further details may be obtained from **The Secretary, Rothmans University Endowment Fund, c/o The University of Sydney, NSW 2006, Australia, or from the Association of Commonwealth Universities (Appts), 36 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PF.**

Applications close on **25 July 1980.**

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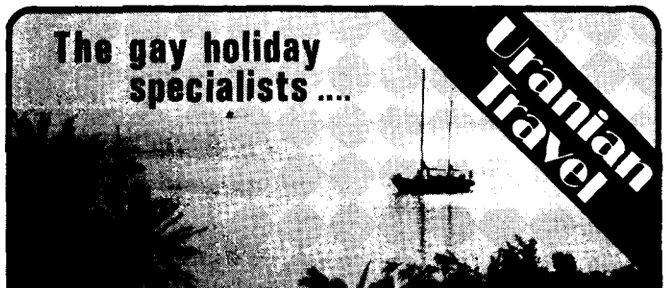
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Theatres

ALDWYCH THEATRE Royal Shakespeare Company. 836 6404. Recorded booking info 836 5332. cc 379 6233 (10-6, Sats and day of perf. 10.4). No perf. 7 April. New London season opens 8 April with 'Twelfth Night'. Also 'The Merry Wives of Windsor' from 7 May and 'The Life and Adventures of Nicholas Nickleby' from 5 June. RSC also at The Warehouse in Chekhov's 'Three Sisters'. RSC also at the Piccadilly Theatre in Moss Hart and George S. Kaufman's 'Once In A Lifetime' and Pam Gems' 'Piaf'.

NATIONAL THEATRE. 928 2252. No perfs Good Friday. 'Amadeus', 'As You Like It', 'Othello', 'Death of a Salesman'. Sat. 5 April last perf. 'The Iceman Cometh'. Prev. 11 April 'Early Days'. See daily press for dates & times or ring recorded info: 928 2256.

Cinema

SCREEN ON THE HILL. 435 3366 (opp. Belsize Park Tube). 'My Brilliant Career' (U). Progs. 3.20, 5.20, 7.20, 9.20.

Poetry

MATCHLIGHT 'British Poetry' Today'. Orangery, Holland Park. 7.15 p.m. 10 April. Leo Aylen/Judith Kazantzis (+ D. G. Rossetti). 01-352 7409.

Exhibition

'DETRITUS' by G. Roy Levin a mixed media art work at the Pentonville Gallery, 46 Amwell Street, EC1. Tel. 01-837 9826 20 March to 26 April. Mon.-Sat. 11 a.m.-6 p.m.

Meetings

MEETING ON CENSORSHIP in the Media, Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Thurs. 17 April 7 p.m. Spkrs: Stuart Hood and Philip Hodson (Editor of 'Forum').

ICA EVENTS, The Mall, SW1. 10 April 1 p.m. Melvyn Bragg discusses his new book *'Kingdom Come'* £1. 01-930 3647.

RAMAKRISHNA VEDANTA CENTRE: Sunday lectures on religion and philosophy. Enquiries: 06285 26464.

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlets, book list, programme. Public Talk 6 April, 8 p.m. 'The Psychology of Reincarnation' ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL.

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The May Report: Implications and Issues

Saturday 26 April 1980, Middlesex Hospital, W1.

In the Chair: **Merlyn Rees**

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Publications

OUTPOSTS. Poems invited for future issues. S.a.e. to Howard Sargeant, 72 Burwood Rd., Walton-on-Thames, Surrey KT12 4AL.

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